

In the Name of God

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In the Name of God

The Bible in the Colonial Discourse of Empire

Edited by

C.L. Crouch and Jonathan Stökl

with the assistance of

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INTRODUCTION

C. L. Crouch and Jonathan Stökl

It was with some trepidation that we agreed to include a session on the use of the Bible in modern imperial contexts in the International SBL's Bible and Empire programme unit, neither of us being specialists in reception history. The first meeting of the session in London in 2011 put any lingering doubts to rest, as an international group of scholars came together for a stimulating and productive session. Six of the papers have been revised and expanded for presentation here, addressing the use of the Bible to justify imperial power as well as a source of resistance for those subjected to that power.

Yvonne Sherwood ('Comparing the "Telegraph Bible" of the Late British Empire to the Chaotic Bible of the Sixteenth Century Spanish Empire: Beyond the Canaan Mandate into Anxious Parables of the Land') and Maria Ana T. Valdez ('The *Esperança de Israel*: A Mission to Cromwell') address the use of the Bible in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires. The former examines the 'sprawling and heterogeneous acts of biblicization' undertaken amongst rhetoricians of the sixteenth century Spanish Empire in connection with its forays into the New World, comparing it to the fractiousness and diversity of the biblical text itself and contrasting it to the simplified, homogenized 'telegraph Bible' of the later British Empire. Straddling the Iberian and the English, Valdez focuses on the varying intents of the scholar Menasseh ben Israel, leader of the Sephardic community in Amsterdam, as revealed in the distinct Spanish and Latin-English versions of his treatise on the supposed discovery of the ten lost tribes of Israel in the New World (*Esperança de Israel/Spes Israelis*), intimately entwined with Jewish and Christian eschatological hopes as well as the political question of the Jews' readmission to England.

Paving the way for the later British Empire, Mark Somos ('*Mare Clausum, Leviathan, and Oceana*: Bible Criticism, Secularisation and Imperialism in Seventeenth-Century English Political and Legal Thought') traces secularisation—the dethronement of Christianity from the political sphere—through biblical exegesis in seventeenth-century English political and legal theory, especially the political theories of Selden, Hobbes and Harrington and the birth of British imperialism. The final three contributions deal with the British Empire proper: in 'The Armies of Gog, the Merchants of Tarshish, and the British Empire', Andrew Mein examines

nineteenth century millenarian interpretations of the Gog of Magog prophecy (Ezekiel 38–39), making sense of their eschatologically-coloured interpretations of Gog as Russia and Britain as Tarshish in the lead up to the Crimean War. Hendrik Bosman ('The "*Jerusalemangers*" as an Illustration of Resistance against the British Empire and Nineteenth Century Biblical Interpretation in Southern Africa') delves into the opposite side of the imperial equation, scrutinising the theological, if not geographical, logic of a small sub-group of *Voortrekkers* and arguing that their incredible attempt to walk to Jerusalem from southern Africa arose, at least in part, from their disenchantment with the British Empire in the Cape Province. Finally, Hugh Pyper draws lines of influence between a British imperial theology based on biblical models and Indian nationalism's relationship to the sacred Sanskrit texts of Hinduism, routing variously through nineteenth century scholarly fascination with the antiquity of Indian traditions and the practicalities of British imperialism.

These half dozen essays represent the beginning of an ongoing dialogue; we hope that our readers enjoy them as much as we have and that they may serve to further the dialogue among those engaged in studying the Bible and the way that it was read and used by later communities.

Nottingham and Leiden
January 2013



Fig. 1: Francesci Mazzola, called Parmagianino [1503–1540], *Allegory on Emperor Charles V*, around 1530. Oil on linen, 172 × 119 cm. Private Collection.

COMPARING THE 'TELEGRAPH BIBLE' OF THE LATE BRITISH EMPIRE
TO THE CHAOTIC BIBLE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY SPANISH
EMPIRE: BEYOND THE CANAAN MANDATE INTO ANXIOUS
PARABLES OF THE LAND

Yvonne Sherwood

The Colonised Field of Bible and Empire

It is not too much of an understatement to say that work on northern Protestant empires and particularly the British Empire has colonised the field of the Bible and Empire. Postcolonial studies in Biblical Studies have their roots in Liberation Theology with strong roots in Latin America. Latino/a scholars such as Fernando Segovia, Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Marcella Althaus-Reid have been leaders in the field. And yet *histories* of the Bible and Empire have side-stepped the first European experiment in empire—strangely avoiding a moment in which writers submerge themselves in Bible in all its chaotic detail, rather than cleanly referencing Bible as an icon and a sign. In a rare allusion to the sixteenth century Spanish empire, Mark Brett seizes on pieces that conform to scholarly edifices of the Bible and Empire that have already been established. He briefly parades the manipulation of God's injudicious gift of the land of Canaan and the kind of derogatory stereotypes that provide the staples for Postcolonialism 101. In a four page excursus with the shocking-expected title 'Savage Brutes and Canaanites' he cites the humanist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, who brashly equated 'barbarians' with 'half-men' 'homunculi', 'apes' and 'women' with a bombast that would have made the Victorians blush.¹

In fact, Brett is barely scratching the surface. He could also have mentioned that most Bullish of Bulls: the world-devouring Papal Bull of

¹ Mark G. Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire* (The Bible in the Modern World 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), pp. 12–15. See Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Tratado sobre las justas causas de la guerra contra los indios* (ed. Manuel García-Pelayo; Mexico: 1941, reprinted 1971), pp. 101, 105, cit. and trans. D. A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots and the Liberal State 1492–1866* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 86.

Alexander VI of 1493, the *Inter Caetera Divinai*.² The Bull proclaims that the Pope can slice up the globe exactly as he or his deity chooses. Reaching into the infinite storehouse of Christendom, the Pope 'gives, grants and assigns' to Ferdinand and Isabella 'all the firm lands and islands found or to be found, discovered or to be discovered toward the west and south, drawing a line from the pole Arctic to the pole Antarctic... from the north to the south', with the caveat (or papal tit-for-tat) that this is for the purpose of 'amplifying and enlarging... the Catholic faith.' Dividing the world as easily as one draws co-ordinates on a map and stopping only when it hits the buffers of land possessed by a rival Christian sovereign, the Bull lavishly applies the 'fullness of apostolic power'. This is propped up by the most obsequious biblical texts. These fawning proofs of ubiquitous Christendom and absolute papal sovereignty include the command 'to replenish the earth and subdue it' (Gen 1:26, 28; 8:17) interpreted as a divine mandate given to Emperor Adam and Emperor Noah; hymns of universal dominion such as 'The earth is the Lord's and all the fullness thereof' (Ps 24:1); Jesus's declaration that 'All power is given to me in heaven and earth' (Matt 28:18); the precedent of Caesar Augustus who in Luke 2:1 who decreed that the 'whole world' should be taxed; and the proclamation/prophecy that 'At the name of Jesus every knee should bow' (Phil 2:8–10).³

Alternatively, Brett could have discussed the quite spectacular 'Requirement' or *Requerimiento*, a 'parable that a novelist of genius would be hard-put to equal,'⁴ according to professor of international politics, Chris Brown. This absurd piece of biblicalised legislation would surely become the showcase piece for *Postcolonialism 101* were it more widely known. Instigated in 1513 and technically still in operation until 1573, the *Requerimiento* was drafted by the royal jurist Palacios Rubios in consultation with a leading expert on Church law, Fray Matías de la Paz. The logic was based on jurist Martín Fernández de Encisco's claim that 'the king might very justly send men to require those idolatrous Indians to hand over their land to him, for it was given him by the pope. If the Indians would not do this, he might

² For the full text see Robert A. Williams, Jr. *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 79.

³ As cited by Francisco de Vitoria, 'On the American Indians (*De Indis*)', in Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance (eds.), *Francisco de Vitoria, Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 253, 257–58.

⁴ Chris Brown, 'The Modern Requirement? Reflections on Normative International Theory in a Post-Western World', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 17:2 (1988) pp. 339–48 (340).

justly wage war against them, kill them and enslave those captured in war, precisely as Joshua treated the inhabitants of the land of Canaan.⁵ Drawing on the biblical Canaan mandate, the *Requerimiento* was effectively an *actualization* of the command in Deuteronomy 20:10: when you 'draw near to a city to fight against it' you must first send a messenger and 'offer terms of peace' (which is to say 'peace' as in 'Peace Studies', the kind of 'peace' that always implies 'war').

The *Requerimiento* performed and implemented this scriptural liturgy of war, in ways that go well beyond Biblical Studies' expansive-conservative model of 'reception', with its primary emphasis on culture, music and art rather than politics and law.⁶ The biblical template was translated into an actual judicial summons to be read to the 'Indians' in the presence of a legal notary, as the Spaniards turned up in the land christened 'New Spain' with the air of bailiffs seeking repossession, as if the Indians had somehow defaulted on the rent. Peremptorily dumping upon them the news that the Pope, as the head of the whole human race, had gifted their land and demanded their Christianisation, the *Requirement* kindly required that the Indians 'take the time that shall be necessary to understand and deliberate upon' this newly acquired fact, adding that if they were to 'maliciously make delay' in assenting, then the 'deaths... which shall accrue' would be '[their] fault'.⁷ The book of Deuteronomy was invoked so that acts that might otherwise appear as random acts of brute force, could be

⁵ Lewis Hanke, *All Mankind is One: A Study of the Disputation between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda on the Religious and Intellectual Capacity of the American Indians* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974) p. 35 and Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), p. 32.

⁶ The triumph of *Rezeptionsgeschichte* in Biblical Studies (over rival terms such as 'cultural history' or *Wirkungsgeschichte*) is, I think, akin to the triumph of reader-response (cf. Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011], pp. 101–7). Like reader-response, 'reception' is the mildest and most individualised form of the theoretical positions available. As a term received from Gadamer and Jauss, 'reception' fits well in a discipline that is most comfortable speaking German. Like 'exegesis' or 'hermeneutics', 'reception' is a specialist word particular to Biblical Studies. 'Reception Histories' of Joyce's *Ulysses*, Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, or *Das Kapital* are hard to find. Compare the comments in Timothy Beal, 'Reception History and Beyond: Toward the Cultural History of Scriptures', *Biblical Interpretation* 19 (2011), pp. 357–72.

⁷ For the multiple editions of the *Requerimiento*, see Patricia Seed, 'The Requirement: A Protocol for Conquest' in Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 69–99 (69). See also Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought*, pp. 88–93. For discussion, see Sherwood, 'Francisco de Vitoria's More Excellent Way: How the Bible of Empire Discovered the Tricks of [the Argument from] Trade' in *Biblical Interpretation*, forthcoming.

re-presented as pre-meditated, judicious and lawful: in a word, *prescripted*. To write is to think, to consider, to pre-meditate, to refer to and cross-reference, and to bring within the law. There is an intimate relationship between gods and laws. To make-scriptural is to make-divine. The ritual of writing, or scripturalising, is at least as important as the content. To write is to take care: to perform the laborious act of writing by hand, in careful consultation with other scripts and scriptures. Writing (and, more than this, writing according to the template of scripture) transmogrifies violence into responses to acts of dictation, given to us from the ultimate ciphers of authority: the pen of the notary and the voice of the god.

The *Requerimiento* is an appropriate relic of an empire which obsessively took notes. 'Discoverers' were accompanied by notaries who drew up legal documents in ritualized acts of *toma de posesión* ('taking possession'). On landing on the beach at Guanahani, Columbus 'called to the two captains and to the others who had jumped ashore and to Rodrigo Descobedo, the *escribano* [notary] of the whole fleet... and he said that they should be witnesses that, in the presence of all, he would take, as in fact he did take, possession of the said island for the king and for the queen his lords, making the declarations that were required, and which at more length contained the testimonials made there in writing'.⁸ The basic toolkit of colonisation seems to contain three crucial elements: something to plant (a flag, a royal banner, or a cross); pen and paper; and an *escribano* (a notary, from *escribir*, to write). In the case of the *Requerimiento*, Deuteronomy 20:10–15 supplies the scriptural/paper foundation, the structure of notification, and the lofty imprimatur of 'Bible'. In an act of fundamentalism *avant la lettre*, the letters of scripture bore down into the landscape, changing the geoscape, making all Christian. By the authority of the divine letter head, so to speak, the empire of writing and scripture changed the title deeds to the land.

These two examples—the Bullish Bull and the *Requerimiento*—seem to quite peaceably extend the domain of truths long since gathered from other (later, Protestant) empires. The Canaan mandate in particular has become notorious in this age of 'ideological criticism' in which 'the Bible and violence' can readily feature as the topic of an SBL presidential

⁸ Christopher Columbus, *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America 1492–1493*, (transcribed and translated by Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), pp. 63–65, cit. Kathryn Burns, *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 1.

address.⁹ We can easily rehearse the history of its bloody application, from Oliver Cromwell in Ireland; to the Boers in South Africa; to the brutal British retaliation against the rebels during the 1857 Indian 'Mutiny'; to politico-religious justifications for the settlement of the West Bank or 'Judea' and 'Samaria'; to the retaliation against My Lai in the War in Vietnam.¹⁰ As an outpost or periphery for truths that are already consolidated and well-established, the dim and distant Catholic empire seems to conveniently ground the widespread image of the Bible as a solid bed-rock for the possession of the land. As the patriarchs of Genesis planted names, wells and history in graphic dramas of etiology and appropriation so, it seems, the 'discoverers' planted and built on Bible. They '*biblicised*' as automatically as they re-christened territory after Spain and the Spanish monarchs, or (with an almost disarming honesty) planted names such as the Rich Coast (*Costa Rica*), the Rich Port (*Puerto Rico*), or Argentina (from *argentums*, silver), organising the new geography around longed-for seams of silver and gold.

The *Requerimiento* and the Bull seem to bombastically proclaim a *Bible with no outside*. According to the script of the *Requerimiento*, the notaries and conquistadores spoke on behalf of 'the Lord our God, living and eternal' who 'created the heaven and the earth, and one man and one woman, of whom you and we, and all the men of the world, were and are descendants' and who 'gave charge to one man, called St. Peter, that he should be lord and superior of all the men in the world, that all should obey him, and that he should be the head of the whole human race, wherever men should live, and under whatever law, sect, or belief they should be'. The reign of the Bible is eternal and ubiquitous. It colonises time and space. The One who has the whole 'world for his kingdom and jurisdiction' has passed on this dominion to 'these pontiffs, who succeeded that St. Peter as lord of the world'. Under the relentless pressure of global-eternal dominion, the 'Indians' and 'barbarians' have no option but to be stifled, suffocated and pegged down under the canopy of the biblical. There is no time or space in which to live and breathe other than Christian/biblical time and space.

⁹ John J. Collins, 'The Zeal of Phinehas: The Bible and the Legitimation of Violence', *JBL* 122 (2003), pp. 3–21.

¹⁰ For the now widely familiar litany of examples, see for example Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique* (New York: Continuum, 1997). On Joshua and My Lai, see Harold C. Washington, 'Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach', *Biblical Interpretation* 5 (1997), 324–63.

Thus the *Requerimiento* and the Bull seem to offer themselves as allegories of the Colonial Bible as a universal-eternal book. There is no 'there' that is not part of its 'here'; no 'then' that is not part of its eternal 'now'. They seem to stand as textbook examples of capture by inscription; of empire as a textual edifice, with the emphasis on both terms: 'text' and 'edifice'. Particularly now, in this (passing?) age of 'constructs', we are prone to think of the New World as a massive paper edifice made by a spectacular and horrific work of origami. We think in terms of taking paper possession: making a 'New' World by cutting, pasting and folding the archives of the Old. In a book with the once striking, but now completely commonplace, title *De-scribing Empire*, Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson make the now familiar case that, though 'imperial relations were usually established by force' (a combination of 'guns, guile and disease'), they were 'largely maintained by discourse, textuality, and other semiotic devices'.¹¹ Antonio de Nebrija's famous statement that 'language was always the companion of empire'¹² is often cited as a self-condemning indictment of empire, not least because of the fortuitous coincidence that it was made in the dedication to his first grammar of the Castilian language published in that momentous year, 1492. Working with the legacies of Marxist philosophers Antonio Gramsci and Henri Lefebvre, nineteenth and twentieth century political theory has honed the concept of 'hegemony', analysing how the *hegemon* (leader state) achieves dominance through bureaucracy, economy, social structures and *language* rather than the simple direct extension of military force. The *Requerimiento* and the Papal Bull seem to provide a showcase example of Christian Spain exporting Bible as the imperial *lingua franca*. They appear to concretise the Latinisation and biblicisation of the landmass that would later be called *Latin America* through the export of the Vulgate. We can watch the expected (horrific) pageant of an old zealous Vulgate with imperialistic, totalising pretensions, crashing into foreign lands, as if by way of a cartoon version of the

¹¹ Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (eds.), *De-Scribing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality* (London: Routledge, 1994), 'Introduction: The Textuality of Empire', pp. 1–15 (3).

¹² Antonio de Nebrija, Bishop of Avila, *Gramatica Castellana* (Madrid: Junta del Centenario, 1946), preface. Presenting the grammar to Queen Isabella as a gift, Nebrija envisages a very practical application: 'After Your Highness takes under her yoke many barbarian towns and nations with strange tongues, and with the conquering of them, they will need to receive the laws that the conqueror puts on the conquered and with those, our language' (*Gramatica Castellana*, p. 11).

now famous allegory of colonisers wielding a Bible in one hand and in the other, a gun or sword.¹³

These sure and certain applications of the biblical and Christian in the early Spanish empire seem to reinforce the very sure and confident Bible that we find in the work of theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Michel de Certeau. It seems that the good old Bible can be depended on to be reliably violent and consistent—even in a climate of theoretical volatility. In postcolonial theory, the Bible often endures as a stable (and dreary) reference point in a world where everything else is outwith the coloniser's or colonised's control. For de Certeau, the Bible of empire is dictatorial, solid, lumpish, resilient: 'immunised against...any alterity that might transform it and whatever dare[d] to resist it'.¹⁴ Bhabha's Bible is an agent of 'coercive reality'; a quasi-fundamentalist monologic-monotheistic-monotone force.¹⁵ This Bible is famously susceptible to acts of subversion and hybridisation impinging on it from the outside—at least according to the evidence of the one essay where Bhabha treats the Bible: 'Signs Taken for Wonders; Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817'. Bhabha's Bible is a solid and intransigent object; a book that has got its story together. Appropriately, the book of books appears as the ultimate textual emblem of the *hegemon*; a stark sign of the export of linguistic and ideological force.

*The 'Telegraph Bible' in Contrast to the Bible of the Spanish Empire:
Controlling the Circuitry of Capital and Signs*

Bhabha's image of a Bible as monotone instrument of 'coercive reality' is not even true of the Bible of the late British Empire. But it works much better for the late British Empire than for the first European experiments

¹³ As Swami Vivekananda famously thundered at the first Parliament of Religions at Chicago: 'You come with the Bible in one hand and the conqueror's sword in the other'. See *The Missionary Review of the World* 17.12 (1894) p. 882, cit. R. S. Sugirtharajah 'Biblical Studies after the Empire: From a Colonial to a Postcolonial Mode of Interpretation,' in Sugirtharajah (ed.) *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) pp. 12–22 (15).

¹⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) p. 216.

¹⁵ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 121. Cf. Stephen D. Moore, 'Bhabha and Bible' in *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (The Bible in the Modern World, 12: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), pp. 86–96.

with the Bible and Empire. We need very different frameworks (or, better, we need to abandon existing frameworks) to grasp the sprawling and heterogeneous acts of biblicisation that took place as—with few existing templates and with the whole chaotic world of the Bible at their disposal—friars, theologians and lawyers attempted to place, process and justify the so-called New World. R. S. Sugirtharajah describes the Bible of the Victorian empire as a document of pastoral managerialism and a largely contentless ‘icon containing civilizing properties.’¹⁶ In other words it is a version of what I have described elsewhere as a *Liberal Bible*: a Bible that has emptied itself as content in order to become an iconic foundation and a sign.¹⁷ It is also what I’m thinking of as the *Telegraph Bible*, by which I mean a Bible that was *on message* and that could be reduced to a few precise gestures; and a Bible that was structured by a few simple coercive contrasts like the dot-dash binary of Morse Code.

Even in their more theoretical or postcolonial mutations, biblical scholars tend to be, primarily, textualists, philologists and readers, operating with devoted attention to ‘the text’. We have obsessed, revealingly, about gods, authors and readers and what passes between them, while generally paying less attention to the material conditions of transmission. Thinking about the difference between the Bible of the Catholic Spanish empire and later Protestant empires, we need to think, primarily, about the different technologies of communication and meaning management—rather than automatically thinking in terms of different translations, editions, and a different emphasis on Bible. (How instinctively we think in terms of enclosed theological and textual histories!). As I will show, it is the material conditions, and technologies, of communication that put the Spanish empire at such a distance from later British empires, and far closer to the mechanisms of communication modelled in the Bible itself.

The nineteenth century British empire—the key focus for histories of the Bible and Empire—was the age of the expansion of the optical (semaphore) telegraph, followed by the electric telegraph. Inventors of the electric telegraph famously invoked biblical/theological tropes of miracles and omnipresence, or omni-transmission. The first Morse Code

¹⁶ R. S. Sugirtharajah ‘Biblical Studies after the Empire’, p. 15.

¹⁷ See further Sherwood, ‘The God of Abraham and Exceptional States: The Early Modern Rise of the Whig/Liberal Bible’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 76:2 (2008), pp. 312–43; and ‘On the Genesis of the Alliance between the Bible and Rights’, in *Biblical Blaspheming: Trials of the Sacred for a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2012), pp. 303–32.

message, transmitted by Samuel Morse in 1844, was famously 'What God hath wrought' (Numbers 23:23). In India, the jewel in the crown of the British Empire and a key focal point for studies in the Bible and Empire, a project laying 4,000 miles (6,400 km) of telegraph lines was begun in the early 1850's. The same decade saw the unification of the postal system, shortly followed by the opening of telephone exchanges in 1882 in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai.

In the optical telegraph, messages are condensed into a few operations of shutters and levers, observed from station to station through a telescope. In the electric telegraph, they are transmitted through the pulse of electric current. *The 'Telegraph Bible' is the Bible of an Empire that has the resources for controlling the circuitry of capital and signs.* The Telegraph Bible is also a Bible of telescoped, condensed communication. The author of *The Telegraph to India: Suggestions to the Senders of Messages* (1870) recommends the 'utmost brevity compatible with clearness', which he proceeds to demonstrate by showing how Johnstone (in Weston-Super-Mare) can, with least expense and most precision, write to Higson (in 'Bombay').¹⁸ The loss of a single word can reduce the price by as much as twenty or thirty shillings. One should avoid secret words, and choose 'known words', words that are 'more easily signalled', for the more intelligible a message is to the manipulator, the less the risk of 'mutilation or delay'.¹⁹ For maximum efficiency, one should opt for words that are virtually identical in different languages, by which he means, primarily, European languages. The selected examples are fascinating: 'paper', 'maximum', 'sentence', 'statistics', 'moment', 'seraphic' and 'communication'. Searching for the points at which languages are most safely identical, the anonymous author chooses angels (presumably invoked because of their function as messengers or a divine postal service); the material stuff of communication

¹⁸ Readers wanting to compose their own telegraphs should note that:

HIGSON

Bombay

Weston-Super-Mare. Twenty seventh. Arrived safely. Found all well. Impossible to obtain the fifteen hundred pounds. Can't proceed at present.

JOHNSTONE

should be reworded as:

HIGSON

Bombay

All well. Cannot obtain 1500. Cannot proceed.

JOHNSTONE.

¹⁹ *The Telegraph to India: Suggestions to the Senders of Messages* (London: Edward Stanford, 1870), pp. 7–9.

(paper); examples of the building blocks of grammar (sentence); the word 'communication'; and words like 'statistics' and 'maximum'. First coined in the eighteenth century, and passing virtually unchanged between English, French and German, statistic (from German *Statistik*) and maximum (from French *maximum*) are assumed to operate as a universal quasi-metrical standard. It seems that languages are most reliable when they have recourse to pan-European (Christian) angels, or the kinds of words that are closest to the universal lexis of numbers; or when the stuff and brute fact of communication ('communication' 'paper') is repeated, tautologically, as if the incantation of 'communication' ensures the fact of communication itself. Language finds greatest transparency between '*Statistik*' and 'seraphs': between the nascent lexis of managerialism and counting, and the (Christian) heavens, which transcend national boundaries. Modern technologies, like modern philosophies, do not like obscurities and secrets. The apprentice telegraph-writer is warned that secret messages will only be accepted 'on toleration'. And, again, the examples are revealing. Selecting examples of the numinous and dubious, and the local (as opposed to the universal), our author chooses ancient and modern cities, *abstract* qualities, and *heathen* gods.

There can be no 'hegemon' without the media infrastructure to support it and wire it to the peripheries. Or to put it another way, hegemony is an effect of technology, closely allied with capital, as Armand Mattelart slickly and swiftly communicates in his little book *Networking the World*. As Mattelart puts it:

The nineteenth century saw the establishment of the British empire as the new economic and financial pole toward which the main flows of wealth and long-distance communication converged. London became the centre of a world-economy in the sense given by the historian Fernand Braudel, i.e., a center from which the other powers, intermediate zones, and peripheral regions were organized and in relation to which they situated themselves hierarchically.²⁰

Jeremy Stolow argues that new technologies, like the telegraph, were instrumental in producing the very notion of 'centre' and 'periphery' by allowing a 'far more radical separation of signifying systems from the physical movement of objects.'²¹ The increased polarisation of centre/

²⁰ Armand Mattelart, *Networking the World 1794–2000* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) pp. 10–11.

²¹ Jeremy Stolow, 'Salvation by Electricity' in Hent de Vries (ed.) *Religion Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 668–86 (673).

metropole and periphery was *produced* by 'the economy of the signal'.²² The electric pulse of 'telegraphy redefine[d] longstanding spatiotemporal relations of centre and periphery, the global and the local or the proximate and the distant.'²³ By creating a new world 'freed from the constraints of geography',²⁴ and outpacing the known limits of the material, the electric telegraph conjured the dramatic resurgence of the spectral and supernatural: the realm of magic, gods, spectres, angels ('seraphs') and ghosts. It facilitated the standardization of news reportage and the coordination of strategic investments in international commodity markets. And it accommodated fantasies and actualities of global *management*, organised around the binary sign. Our little introductory manual, *The Telegraph to India*, expresses this tension perfectly, in the recourse to statistics and seraphs. The new technologies are haunted—but they offer fantasies of absolute standardisation and efficiency. Communication can fold back on itself perfectly as 'communication'. As Mattelart puts it, the telegraph facilitates a new, quasi-metrical understanding of communication as '*standardising and doing away with chance*'.²⁵

*The Bible, Politics and Technology: The Bible and the Spanish Empire
as Similarly Conflicted 'States'*

This model, and these technologies, apply neither to the Bible, nor the early Spanish empire, as represented in its surviving textual archives. These are strangely similar. Both are chaotic. Both are full of heterogeneous, competing views—often in violent conflict. In both cases, some of these were (clearly) lost, while others survive. In contrast with the later British empire, communication was one of a 'thousand weak points' in the 'unwieldy Spanish empire'.²⁶ The Bible is similarly unwieldy. Though it encompasses beliefs that late moderns find hard to swallow, it hardly ever takes for granted our belief in communication, in its late modern sense.

²² Stollow, 'Salvation by Electricity', p. 673.

²³ Stollow, 'Salvation by Electricity', p. 673.

²⁴ James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 673.

²⁵ Mattelart, *Networking the World*, p. 4.

²⁶ Ferdinand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, (University of California Press: 1996), 2 vols, vol. 2, p. 744.

Biblical authors, and even biblical gods, seem incapable of dreaming models of communication as '*standardising and doing away with chance*'.²⁷

Scholars of the Bible and Empire are not alone in the automatic retrojection of models taken from modern politics and technologies. In the work of early modern historians, we find a similarly mechanistic retrojection of mechanicity and automaticity, and thoroughly modern organisations of capital, meanings, and state. As Jack P. Greene complains:

Until relatively recently, most historians of early modern empire used the coercive and centralized model of imperial organization derived from late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century empires. In this conception, empires were political entities in which colonies were presided over by powerful nation-states with vast administrative and coercive resources to enforce their claims to sovereignty... The very concepts of colony and colonial were freighted with powerful overtones of subjection, subordination, dependence, domination, inferiority, incapacity and alterity. Colonies were places and colonials were people over whom national states exercised hegemonic control.²⁸

'Metropole' and 'periphery' are anachronistic for this period. So, for that matter, are 'Spain', 'Europe' or 'Bible' (in the later modern sense of a reified print object) as well as 'nation' or 'state', in the modern sense. Early modern transatlantic empires were 'reflections or logical extensions of the states to which they were symbolically attached' and 'Those states were not modern states.'²⁹ National states, in the sense of 'relatively centralized, differentiated, and autonomous organizations successfully claiming priority in the use of force within large, contiguous and clearly defined territories', were late arrivals on the map of Europe. In 1490, on the eve of Europe's expansion across the Atlantic, 'Europe' was made up of just under five hundred regional political entities with widely varying political and constitutional traditions. These included large old-established states, new principalities, dynastic empires, city states, and confederations; the Holy Roman Empire, representing 'the ideal of universal world monarchy'; and the papacy, with its claims to worldwide spiritual and temporal

²⁷ Mattelart, *Networking the World*, p. 4.

²⁸ Jack P. Greene, 'Transatlantic Colonization and the Redefinition of Empire in the Early Modern Era', in Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (eds.), *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 267–82 (268).

²⁹ Greene, 'Transatlantic Colonization', p. 268.

jurisdiction.³⁰ The most massive, 'unifying' (?) claims to universality and 'hegemony' were split, at source, between the Pope and Emperor, as representatives of spiritual and temporal power. These two competing universals were frequently engaged in tense conflicts and fragile alliances. And the cracks and uneasy alliances on the 'domestic' scene were amplified and openly paraded in debates over the ground for 'universal' dominion of the New World. Even at 'home', 'monarchs lacked the fiscal, administrative, and coercive resources necessary to achieve centralized and integrated polities through either coercive or administrative means.'³¹ 'Coalescence, however it happened and whatever its form, invariably involved negotiation' or 'bargaining' between the crown and the ruling classes of different provinces. Extension of territories often produced composite monarchies with elements of 'continuing self-government', leaving some regions governed by different laws, while technically attached to the crown.³²

According to Edward Shils who coined the now well-worn concepts of 'centre' and 'periphery', the centre indicates the 'order of symbols, of values and beliefs which govern the society' and the 'network of institutions' which, through the 'radiation of their authority, give some form to the life of a considerable section of the population of the society.' The centre is 'the locus of the sacred, the order which confers legitimacy'. 'Peripherality' is both sociostructural and geographical. 'Attachment' becomes more 'attenuated' as one moves further away (and not just geographically) from the edifices of learning, justice and governance that comprise the centre of symbolic power.³³ In pre-modern societies, most of the population lived outside society, or outside the 'centre'. This outside was amplified in the context of the 'New World'.

³⁰ Mark Greengrass, ed. *Conquest and Coalescence: The Shaping of the State in Early Modern Europe* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991), pp. vii, 1–2, 3; cit. Greene, 'Transatlantic Colonization', p. 268.

³¹ Elizabeth Mancke, 'Negotiating an Empire: Britain and Its Overseas Peripheries, c. 1550–1780' in Daniels and Kennedy (eds.), *Negotiated Empires*, pp. 235–65 (236). Cf. Tamar Herzog, *Upholding Justice: Society, State, and the Penal System in Quito (1650–1750)* (University of Michigan Press: 2004) and Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1979).

³² Greene, 'Transatlantic Colonization', p. 268, drawing on Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, A.D. 990–1990* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), and J. H. Elliott, 'A Europe of Composite Monarchies', *Past and Present* 137 (1992), pp. 48–71.

³³ All citations in this paragraph are from Edward Shils, 'Centre and Periphery', in Paul Ignatius (et al.) *The Logic of Personal Knowledge: Essays in Honour of Michael Polanyi* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1971), pp. 117, 120, 122–25.

The reality was very different to the wish-fulfilment scenario of the *Requerimiento* or its graphic equivalent, the static mannerist complacency of Francesci Mazzola Parmagianino's *Allegory on Emperor Charles V*, where Charles, doubly assisted by the boy Hercules and an angel, gets a very firm grip upon the globe (fig. 1).³⁴ Lacking the financial resources to pay for, or dream of, 'hegemony', the Spanish monarchy outsourced discovery and possession to private individuals who were given 'licenses with wide discretion' in the hope of securing 'at least nominal jurisdiction over American territories and peoples at minimal cost to royal treasuries'.³⁵ This led to the creation of rival centres of wealth, and adventurers-turned-landed-gentry, new *hidalgos*, potentially beyond the reach of law and crown.

Not only was the Spain that extended itself not a nation, or a state, in a modern sense. It was split by 'painful fissures'.³⁶ There were tensions between the Crown and the new, distant, centres of power and wealth, flexing their muscles. There were rivalries between competing Christian orders, such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans; and between the missionaries and conquistadores. Effects of *Realpolitik* produced surprising holograms of 'justice'. At times, the Crown went a surprisingly long way to support advocates of justice for the 'Indian', such as the Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566) because negotiation over care for the Indian was a way of bringing potentially renegade conquistadores under the yoke of 'law' and scripture, and closer to the control of the crown.

As Amy Turner Bushnell observes, the Spanish Hapsburg empire does not fit stereotypes of 'empire'. It breaks out of their control, particularly around the issue of management and control. The empire was shaped by 'unseemly levels of bureaucratic flexibility, unlikely pockets of moral tolerance, and untenable disparities between law and practice'.³⁷ Moreover, 'cartographic representations of the Americas as spaces under European jurisdiction marked the unevenness of actual hegemony'. In the mid-eighteenth century, two centuries after the Spanish conquest of Mexico and Peru, independent Indians controlled over half of the land mass

³⁴ The globe is interchangeable with the emperor's orb, as the image of the entire universe (*totius mundi imago*). See Francesca Fiorani, *The Marvel of Maps: Art, Cartography and Politics in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 40.

³⁵ Greene, 'Transatlantic Colonization', p. 270.

³⁶ Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517–1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 [2nd edn; 1st edn 1987]), p. 127.

³⁷ Amy Turner Bushnell, 'Gates, Patterns and Peripheries', in Daniels and Kennedy (eds.), *Negotiated Empires*, pp. 15–28 (17).

that we think of today as Spanish America. . . .'³⁸ Our (and their) sense of possession is/was concentrated around the *ecumene*: the area organised around, and concentrated in the new cities, such as Mexico City or Lima. But these concentrated pockets of 'mastery' and symbolic export did not extend into massive areas of forest and desert. The vast expanse of northern Mexico, the Central-American lowlands, Patagonia, or Tierra del Fuego made up a massive 'periphery', entirely outwith Spanish control.³⁹

When Serge Gruzinski speaks of 'the gigantic enterprise of Westernization that swooped down on the American continent'⁴⁰ he anachronistically retrojects the nineteenth century term 'Westernisation'—a term that arguably depends on a distinctively modern infrastructure of technology and trade. The Spanish empire lacked the technological and economic infrastructure to stretch, financially or communicatively, to the same extent as the nineteenth century British empire. Texts and signs were not efficiently exported. 'Westernisation' was not consolidated; nor did 'it' 'swoop'. It was concentrated in the cities with their courts of law, cathedrals, palaces, mints and theatres, serviced by a new infrastructure of ports and mines.

The same principle, or lack of organising principle, applied to the Bible of the Spanish empire. The Bible of the late British Empire stood firm on sure and accumulated precedent and well-tried systems of justification. It was grounded in a material infrastructure of swift communication systems: telegraphs, railways and tightly organised bureaucracies and administrative hierarchies. Meanings travelled (relatively) neatly and slickly. Deployments of the biblical seem pared down, repetitive, productive and self-enforcing, as befits an industrial economy and the telegraph age. They drew on a well-tried, slimmed-down canon of a few carefully selected (mostly New Testament) texts. In stark contrast, sixteenth century Spaniards were biblicising and Christianising without templates. Their Bible sprawled into politics, law, administration, proto-anthropology, and religion (*qua* 'idolatry'). It knew no limits and edges. It also operated with no

³⁸ David J. Weber, 'Bourbons and Bárbaros: Center and Periphery in the Reshaping of Spanish Indian Policy' in Daniels and Kennedy (eds.), *Negotiated Empires*, pp. 79–104 (79).

³⁹ Weber, 'Bourbons and Bárbaros', p. 79.

⁴⁰ Serge Gruzinski, *Images at War: Mexico from Columbus to Blade Runner (1492–2019)* (Duke University Press: 2001), p. 2. Admittedly Gruzinski is not only talking about Westernization in relation to '1492'. In fact, the time-span of this wonderful book extends to 2019 (!).

template transmission message; no precedent for how to map these alien peoples and landscapes onto biblical texts.

Despite concerted attempts to control expeditions, to bring taxes and gold to Spain, and to streamline legislation through the Council of the Indies and appointed viceroys and corregidores, the Spanish empire could boast nothing to rival the government of the British Raj (administered through the British Colonial Office, a Secretary of State for India, a fifteen member Council of India, a central government in Calcutta, and an elaborate administrative hierarchy of Viceroys, Governors-General, Lieutenant Governors, High Commissioners, and indigenous princes). It lacked the nervous system of railways, roads, ships, canals, and bridges that transported raw materials from India, and finished goods back to Britain, and the telegraph links that allowed for the almost instant conveyance of words. There was nothing like the massive international machine for soul-saving. By the end of the nineteenth century there were twelve thousand British missionary workers worldwide, with Missionary Societies spending two million pounds (the equivalent of 2% of the expenditure of the British government) per annum. In 'New Spain', the task of conversion began with a mere iconic Twelve, a 'ludicrously small number of men to entrust with the conversion of an Indian population estimated in millions'.⁴¹ Missionary manpower remained low. Even by the late 1550's, the Yucatán had only three-hundred and eighty friars. Words and goods, including conceptual goods, did not find their way 'home' so easily. Like other colonial goods—not least the bodies of the 'Indian'—the Bible and its chaos of meanings were often torn between the incommensurable interests, and shifting alliances, of conquistadores, crown and Church.

These divisions and heterogeneities found a sounding board in the sixteenth century Bible: a book that was not yet organised by quasi-colonial management structures; a book that was not yet, or not just, a book, in several senses. It was not yet, or not merely, a print document. Bible segued seamlessly into practice, liturgy, confession—and oral memory. Nor was it a book with edges, which is to say a book that had a clear delimited remit which could be separated from other spheres like geography or law. It certainly did not belong to a confined and defined sphere of 'Religion' (as opposed to, say 'Politics' or 'Anthropology'). It was more of a 'synthetic field, the site where the disciplines converge' and an 'active

⁴¹ Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan 1517–1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 47.

arena in discursive exchange'.⁴² These words are borrowed from Debra Shuger's description of the Bible of the European Renaissance/Reformation. She is describing the 'multidisciplinary' Bible of the elite correspondents in the European Republic of Letters. In the early colonial context, the Bible was also the 'primary locus for a good deal of what we might classify as cultural, psychological or anthropological reflection.'⁴³ Here the premise was also, as Richard Hooker put it in 1607, that 'there is no part of true philosophy, no art of account, no kind of science [*including science of commonwealth*] rightly so called, but the Scripture must contain it'⁴⁴—but with crucial differences. Interpretation was not confined (in terms of social class or disposition) to the gentlemanly circle of Republic of Letters. *Amateurs* were involved in anthropological and cultural and political-theological reflection. Many literate frailes and conquistadores had a go, without any parameters or guidelines for how to apply biblical templates to a New World. And the very strangeness of the people and cultures put pressure on writers to actively hunt out the most baroque, *unheimlich* and contradictory aspects of the biblical text.

In this context, applications of the Bible could be diffuse, experimental—and sometimes terrifying—even (especially) when writers were attempting to apply 'the Bible' in absolute good faith. The stakes of biblical interpretation were high; the consequences massive. Accidents of the biblical happened all over the place. The interpretative risks that were taken appear shocking—even heretical—to late moderns who expect a Bible to operate within a well-worn and limited range of meanings and effects. To touch on some examples (that I discuss in more detail elsewhere) the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún depicted Spanish-*Babylonians* attacking Mesoamerican-*Judeans*, making the Indian into the home nation, attacked from the outside. The 'skull rack' or *tzompantli* on which the Aztecs displayed the heads of sacrificed victims, was regularly compared to Golgotha. The *unheimlich* nature of alien practices was expressed in a bricolage or hodge-podge of different biblical times and spaces. Their 'communion' took place in a Temple and was presided over by Levites. The 'Indians' were compared to Israel/the Hebrews because they were fast becoming 'not-a-people', like the 'Hebrews' of Hosea 1, or because their

⁴² Debra Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 3.

⁴³ Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible*, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I, xiv, 1, cit. Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 23.

religion was adulterated, mixed. These readings of the Indian in relation to Israel went well beyond expected clichés the rediscovered lost ten tribes (though some interpreters certainly thought that they had found them). The interpretation of the Indians as Israel accommodated sophisticated and multifaceted responses, voiced in biblical vocabularies. The biblical template provided a forum for exploring Indian religions as Jewish, Christian, and pagan because, as God and the prophets often complain, biblical religion is always ‘mixed’. The figure of the jeopardy of Israel/the Indian facilitated scenes of lament, catastrophe and self-critique.

The audacity and sprawl of these acts of biblicisation map well onto the Bible—and help us to think about the Bible differently. For the Bible is also strangely ungoverned and mixed. There is a clear lack of central planning or interpretative control. In our search for earlier versions of ‘the West’ or ‘Europe’, late moderns tend to think, automatically, of ‘Christendom’ or that emblem of Christendom, the Bible. Mirroring the solid Bibles of Bhabha or de Certeau, early American historian Patricia Seed imagines the sixteenth century Bible as the manifesto of a ‘European God’ ‘harnessed’ to ‘technology and print’.⁴⁵ She thinks in terms of a Telegraph Bible: a Bible that has got its story together and that functions as a technologically-streamlined source of power to be applied, as if at the flick of a switch. *But in fact, the Bible is more like sixteenth century ‘Spain’ or the partially colonised New World, or the textual remnants left by those sixteenth century ‘Europeans’ who were far too internally schismatic to constitute a party, a ‘Europe’ or a ‘West’.*

Though we have been rather prone to paper over them with concepts like ‘the religion of Israel’ or ‘Christianity’, the Bible is not only conflicted, but wears its conflicts openly on its sleeve. In the overtly schismatic New Testament, Jesus comes to bring fire, sword and division (Matt 10:34; Luke 12:51). He is presented as openly antagonising and blaspheming against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And he makes schismatic temporal statements, slicing time, such as ‘Before Abraham I am’ (John 8:58). Paul (like his prophetic predecessors) is always addressing hostile audiences and critics. Paul and Peter are in conflict over the ‘judaisation’ of gentiles (Gal 2:14). Paul typically speaks into a cacophony of conflicting voices claiming ‘I belong to Paul’, or ‘I belong to Apollos’, or ‘I belong to Cephas’, or ‘I belong to Christ’ (1 Cor 1:12). The Old Testament/Tanakh

⁴⁵ Patricia Seed, ‘“Failing to Marvel”: Atahualpa’s Encounter with the Word’, *Latin American Research Review* 26 (1991), pp. 7–32 (14).

clearly hosts different competing religious-political visions: different views of such fundamentals as sacrifice, proper worship, and kings (both the strategy of individual kings, like Jehu and Josiah, and kings in general). As sixteenth century close readers were well aware, the Hebrew Bible was fundamentally divided over whether kings were good or bad things.⁴⁶ Rather like fifteenth century Europe—an amalgam of large old-established states, new principalities, dynastic empires, city states, confederations and the 'Holy Roman Empire'—the world of the Bible is a world of variegated political 'states' and models. The central people of the Bible are often presented as wanderers, without a home, or on their way back home, or as those who live in vassal states (within the empire of Assyria or Babylon) or provinces such as Persian Yehud, or Roman Judea). The political models and anti-models staged range from theocracy, monarchy (and the uncertain relations between them) to governance by judges and military leaders to apocalyptic anarchy, in which the only thing that is certain is that all existing states and worlds will be undone.

In this composite and sprawling archive of cultural memory, the textual *hegemon* or metropolis is extremely hard to find. In late modernity, we imagine the Bible, rather automatically, as 'the centre, the locus of the sacred, the order which confers legitimacy'.⁴⁷ Since it is used as a co-ordinate for so many other knowledges and stories of becoming-modern, we need the Bible to function this way, whether we are inclined to invoke it as a foundation or a foil.⁴⁸ But this solid, secure Bible is grounded on a major (and deliberate) work of forgetting. Specifically, we (must) forget that the Bible stages a quite open competition for the 'locus of the sacred' and 'the order that confers legitimacy'. There are myriad competing visions of political and religious order, and different versions of where, and what, the sacred should be. Even if we were to locate the centre, we could hardly claim that this *hegemon* had successfully exerted that much-vaunted hegemonic force and brought the other books in line. The Bible makes us acutely aware of times and places where attachment to

⁴⁶ See for example Don Isaac Abravanel's (1437–1508) attempt to reconcile conflicting biblical teachings on monarchy and the implications for contemporary politics, in his commentaries on Deuteronomy 17 and 1 Samuel 8. For discussion, see Rochelle L. Millen, 'Abravanel's Concept of Monarchy' in Bryan F. Le Beau and Menchem Mor (eds.), *Religion in the Age of Exploration: The Case of Spain and New Spain* (Omaha, Nebraska: Creighton University Press, 1996), pp. 1–14.

⁴⁷ Shils, 'Centre and Periphery', p. 120, as above.

⁴⁸ See Ward Blanton and Yvonne Sherwood, 'Bible/Religion/Critique' in Richard King (ed.) *Theory/Religion/Critique* (Columbia University Press: 2013).

the 'centre' is attenuated, geographically and temporally. On the *inside* of the Bible, there are considerable pockets of time and space outside the 'order of symbols, of values and beliefs, which govern the society', and the 'network of institutions' which seek to give form to life through the 'radiation of their authority'.⁴⁹ Indeed, these seem to constitute the majority, an uncolonised, uncontrolled space as vast as northern Mexico, the Central-American lowlands, Patagonia, or Tierra del Fuego. The central protagonists of the Bible are constantly pulling away from the centre and asking "How did these nations serve their gods?—that I may also do likewise" (Deut 12:29–31; Psalm 106:34–39). A constant complaint on the *surface* of the biblical text is that truth is rejected and that everything, or almost everything, is compromised, adulterated, mixed.

The limited centripetal force of the Vulgate, with its seventy-six books, can be helpfully compared to late fifteenth century 'Europe' made up of just under five hundred regional political entities with a 'rich variety of [political and constitutional] traditions'. The biblical corpus is also strangely kin to the negotiated empires of the New World. Written without the organisational resources of the Hellenistic codex or authorial persona, the Old Testament/Tanakh is an unsteady syncretistic adventure. Some 'authors' feel with other elements of the 'book' into which they would be incorporated. When Jeremiah criticises the 'lying pen' of the scribes (Jer 8:8) he may well be referring to the 'rediscovered' book of Deuteronomy—as may Ezekiel when he has his God confess (somewhat awkwardly) that he gave his people 'statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live ... [by way of punishment]' (Ezek 20:25–26).⁵⁰ These bold interpretative moves provide interesting inner-biblical parallels for New World observers who talk of 'communion' in a 'temple' administered by Levites, or describe the religion of the Indians as Hebrew because it has never been perfectly anything, but always mixed. The inner-biblical and extra-biblical moves are similarly ingenious and audacious. And they come from the same impetus: to make new innovations/discoveries and old traditions fit, or at the least awkwardly co-exist.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Shils, 'Centre and Periphery', pp. 117, 122–25, as above.

⁵⁰ Cf. Scott Walker Hahn and John Sietze Bergsma, 'What Laws were "Not Good"? A Canonical Approach to the Theological Problem of Ezekiel 20:25–26', *JBL* 123 (2004), pp. 201–18.

⁵¹ On the resourcefulness, ingenuity and awkwardness of canons as composites, see Bernard M. Levenson, 'You Must Not Add Anything to What I Command You: Paradoxes of Canon and Authorship in Ancient Israel', *Numen* 50 (2003) pp. 1–51 and Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Canons, Catalogues and Classics' in A. van der Kooij and Karel van der Toorn

The biblical storehouse of memory models what Jan Assmann calls the 'decadence' of writing.⁵² The memory stock quickly transcends the horizon of 'immediate use' and soon 'encompasses the age-old, out-of-the-way... the noninstrumentalizable, heretical, subversive and disowned'.⁵³ Texts are taken up, adapted, used, copied. Survival depends on copying and 'copying a text is a long and tedious job which is not done without some strong motive'.⁵⁴ But before the age of mechanical reproduction, to copy is to rework, and often prototypes are profoundly changed. There are many lost texts. We know some 'known unknowns', so to speak (such as the tantalising references to the Book of Yasher or the Book of the Wars of the Lord) and can only begin to imagine all the 'unknown unknowns' that fell into obscurity or were destroyed. Many of the texts of the Spanish empire were lost—and for similar reasons. They fell to the censor; they did not have sufficient backing; the author was not close enough to the ascendant parties; or they were not considered useful or important or safe enough to copy or license for print.

Though the compilation of the Bible clearly bears the hallmarks of ideological shaping by ascendant groups, it is still hard to find the centre in either space or time. *Where* are we when we read the Bible? In 'Judah', 'Israel', or elsewhere? Are we meant to be in Egypt or Babylon? Is Babylon to be our Jerusalem, for now? Are annexing powers (Assyria, Babylon and Persia) liberators, upstarts, or divinely-appointed weapons of Yhwh's wrath (or all of the above)? Are we to/did we annihilate the other people and the other gods in the land of Canaan, or should we (did we) awkwardly (or happily) cohabit and intermarry? Who are we? The Indians did not identify as Indians, and the Spaniards did not identify as Spaniards, but coalesced around a series of 'micropatriotisms' and interest groups, and the same seems to be true of the central people[s] of the Bible. Is worship is to be consolidated in Jerusalem or 'Zion'? Is worship

(eds.), *Canonization and Decanonization: Papers presented to the International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions, January 1997* (Numen Studies in the History of Religions 82; Leiden: Brill), pp. 295–311.

⁵² Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* (trans. Rodney Livingstone; Cultural Memory in the Present; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 64. As if addressing biblical specialists directly, Assmann writes 'the history of texts is the history of decadence. That is why all philologists are at pains to arrive at the oldest and most fundamental vision, the archetype. The source of meaning is the authors' intention, and the closer a version comes to the intention, the more meaningful it is'.

⁵³ Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, p. 27.

⁵⁴ Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1987), p. 7.

permitted, or not, at Bethel? Can God/the gods be worshipped at a range of local shrines?

The mere fact of ending up in the Bible does not mean that the citizens of the Bible (so to speak) are clear or unified in their decipherment of history and the will of God. Far from it. Even God is not as unified as he would like. Even the desire for worship of a single God is not consistently expressed. Editors and ascendant groups have done enough to ensure that this is a dominant thread. And yet, at the same time, the process of securing monotheism or even worship of Yhwh as the chief deity is, very openly, deeply insecure. Protests about syncretism, idols, failure and divine jealousy abound. Monotheism is a target, not a secure state, even for God. Competing groups offer different definitions of the true (original) religion and different understandings of the remainder, outside the pure, true core. This excess is itself split. It can be understood as unnecessary or even neutral (*adiaphora*) or contaminating foreign imports. Different authors and groups disagree about where to draw the line between the two. The Bible has neither got its story together, nor expelled all the external contaminants that would make its truth pure and clear. In truth, the Bible is always talking about the fact that it has not yet stabilised its truth. It is raging against, and acknowledging, *the outside on the Bible's inside*.

The difficulty of finding one's place in the Bible is paralleled in the difficulty of finding one's time. *When* are we when we read the Bible? Temporally speaking, does the essence of biblical religion begin with Abraham; or (again?) with Moses; or (again?) with the kings; or (again?) with the prophets; or again (?) with Ezra-Nehemiah?; or with the big New Beginning that comes with Christ? Many times are represented and placed in syncopated relation with one another. The Bible makes this very clear by setting times against one another. A restorative present sets itself against a corrupt past. A failing present is to be remedied in the 'to-come'. This might be soon. Or we must wait awhile. The movement into another sequence, another beginning, cannot help but imply (often explicitly, for example in the Prophets) a critical stance towards past beginnings that failed, or at the very least were not (yet) true or good enough. Depending on which page the Bible falls open at, one can find oneself in a stable present: settlement, entrance into the land, the birth of the messiah. Or one can feel the present as an empty, devastated space. 'Now' is often positioned in the ruins of a past utopia, a lost golden age of paradise, after the destruction of the temple or the love affair of the Exodus. More optimistically, a broken present might look forwards towards the time to-come (immanent, or long deferred) in which it will be radically reshaped.

The New Testament amplifies the ambiguity of the New Beginning. Its New Start is at once deeply appreciative, and dismissive, of the Old Foundation. The supersessionary logic of the New Testament only amplifies what the Hebrew Bible is doing with time all the time. The new dispensation further traumatises space as surely as it divides the times. Is the kingdom here, or to come? If it is tiny, like a mustard seed, when will it be full grown? Will it necessarily grow? Is it to be here, on earth, or there, in the heavens? The time and space of the Bible is a divided, splintered space and time.

These late modern days, the heterogeneity of the canon is a secret known only to biblical scholars and those who, for professional/confessional reasons, still read the Bible in all its unwieldy detail. In modernity, we manage the Bible by dividing it. On one side, in the public realm, we have the Bible as public voice, image, spectre and emblem. This tends to take the form of the Liberal Bible (vague foundation of the goods of modernity) or the Telegraph Bible: the Bible that has got its story together and that is essentially on message. This public Bible is represented by a few resilient textual memes, slogans, or scenes that stand in for the whole. The other, stubbornly non-holistic, Bible is removed to the universities, where the massive edifice of *Verwissenschaftlichung* (scientization) is fuelled by the problems and puzzles of the corpus from which careers are made.⁵⁵

On a macro-level, biblical scholars and theologians have tended to simplify and manage the heterogeneity of the canon. As I have argued elsewhere,⁵⁶ the profession of Biblical Studies has in fact managed the complex terrain of the Bible by organising it rather like a map of the late Victorian empire. Arranged according to a virtual *Principles of Theological Economy*, the 'field' of Old Testament has been distributed such that we know in which books/ideas to find the centre (the Limas, the Mexico Cities)—and, conversely, our Central-American lowlands, Patagonias and

⁵⁵ Cf. Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 29.

⁵⁶ Sherwood "Colonising" the Old Testament or "Representing Christian Interests Abroad": Jewish-Christian Relations Across Old Testament Territory', in S. E. Porter and B. W. R. Pearson (eds.), *Christian-Jewish Relations Through the Centuries* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 255–81. I cross-reference this with some trepidation. In this early paper, I related the 'colonial' reflex purely to Christian anti-Judaism, and Christian theological economies. I would now interpret it more broadly. The division of Old Testament terrain is not just a symptom of Christian prejudice. It is related to the public service role of the institution of Biblical Studies, tasked, quite explicitly, with promoting models of Christianity and Bible that oppose violence and 'fanaticism', support good citizenship and 'tolerance', and generally enforce the ideals of the modern democratic state.

Tierra del Fuegos.⁵⁷ In a profession that was, at its origins, tasked with making the Bible cohere with fundamental principles of good citizenship and modern liberal theology, the goods of the Bible have been strategically distributed to best support these ideals. Some texts or positions have been made into virtual manifestos of human rights and tolerance or virtual *Translations of the Gospel into the Hebrew Tongue*, while others have been deemed remote, 'orientalised', needy and strange. This strategic distribution at a macro-level co-exists with the relish, at the level of minutiae, of all that is dark, difficult, strange and foreign. The discipline thrives on, and needs, 'problems'.⁵⁸ Fracture is an opportunity. We write large books attempting to flesh out the reality behind the blatant conflicts. We hypothesise about the Judaizers, the Hellenisers, the Levites, the Aaronide priesthood, the Zadokites, the Benjaminites, the Maccabees and the Jerusalem priesthood, the conflict between the 'people of the land' and (closer to the symbolic *hegemon* of the Bible, and organising the canon in their interests), the ideologically aggrandized 'returnees'. We produce a 'cats concert' of conflicting accounts of sources.⁵⁹ We attempt to describe these nameless ones and different stylistic and ideological currents using monikers like 'J', 'E', 'D', and 'P'.

But the well-known story of the modern invention of the 'documentary hypothesis' should not lead us to imagine that earlier readers submerged in the details of the Bible were not aware of discordant versions of the same narrative.⁶⁰ We should not imagine that they did not hear (and indeed strategically make use of) the conflicts that the Bible itself overtly screams.

⁵⁷ Cf. John Stuart Mill's famous *Principles of Political Economy* (2 vols.; ed. J. M. Robson; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965). I use the term 'field' quite deliberately, as often the Old Testament is conceived in terms of space. See for example Bernhard W. Anderson's *The Living World of the Old Testament*, where Esther is placed at the 'opposite extreme' to Jonah and Second Isaiah, and where the 'wide vistas' of Second Isaiah or Jonah are contrasted with Esther's 'provincial and vindictive spirit' (Anderson, *The Living World of the Old Testament* [London: Longman, 1988], pp. 607, 610).

⁵⁸ Cf. Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), esp. pp. 75–81.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Palestinian Parties*, p. 5.

⁶⁰ For a more detailed refutation of the naivete of pre-modern interpreters, see Sherwood, 'Binding-Unbinding: Pre-Critical Critique in pre-modern Jewish, Christian and Islamic responses to the "sacrifice" of Abraham/Ibrahim's son' in Sherwood, *Biblical Blaspheming: Trials of the Sacred for a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 333–74.

*The Outside Inside the Adulterated Bible—and the Adulterated
Requerimiento (Which is Part Qur'an)*

In order to show how sixteenth century writers exploited inner-biblical divisions, I want to focus on the strategic manipulation of conflicting biblical traditions of 'the land'. These are a long way from the popular image of a Bible gatecrashing alien territory, confidently brandishing the Canaan mandate, as in the Papal Bull of Alexander or the *Requerimiento*. The Bible of the early Spanish empire had not yet settled in the land. It had not yet settled on the best (most efficient) means of justification. And in this, as in many other respects, the fractured scene of the Spanish empire, and its Bible, mirrored core elements of the biblical drama. For different dramas about the 'land' and anxieties about our place in 'the land' are graphically performed on the surface of the biblical text.

Not unlike the Israel who 'is' and 'is not' (and disappears into the mists of the Assyrian exile), the land is an absent present and a mobile centre. It flows into, and is filled with, the 'peripheries', like 'Canaan'. The land is often empty of its 'true' inhabitants, Israel/Judah, in something of a sardonic inner-biblical twist on the myth of the empty land. The central protagonists wait to enter it—and are frequently driven out of it. Abraham, recipient of the promise of a starburst of descendants and 'the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding' (Gen 17:8) only manages to secure a grave-sized piece of it (Genesis 23), and is constantly exiting the land. Moses is suspended, and buried, on the edges of it. Even when they are in it, the people live in constant threat of being 'vomited' out of it (Lev 18:25, 28). The story of the Old Testament is famously nomadic. God sets it all in motion by commanding 'Arise, go'—then gives the people 'exodus' and 'exile' as their most permanent ground.⁶¹ The Christian vision of a non-terrestrial kingdom 'to come' might itself be based on the biblical narration of this very slippery land of 'milk and honey'. We skid out of it so easily. Firm possession drips through our fingers into the future or the past.

⁶¹ Cf. Kenneth White, *The Wanderer and his Charts: Exploring the Fields of Vagrant Thought and Vagabond Beauty* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004) p. 7: 'At least to start with, the word God pronounces the most is "go". Genesis 11 is all about "getting out", "going away", "passing through".'

Biblical origin stories are also stubbornly and self-destructively non-autochthonous.⁶² In stories of guilty triumph, a literally nascent Israel regularly appears as the second-born son, who inherits by dispossessing his elder brother. In Joshua and Judges, the fantasy of the 'conquest' of Canaan co-exists with alternative traditions of gradual incursion where the space in which we live is always *mestiza*/mixed. It is hard to find our place in the land, in either time or space. The now in which we live can be thought as the time after the time when we lost, or were driven out of the land. Or it can be imagined as the time before we have fully possessed the land, perhaps because of a divinely-programmed delay. There are several explanations for why the possession of the land has been put on a time delay in the 'not yet'. Deut 7:22 explains that 'Lord your God will clear away these nations before you *little by little*; you may not make an end of them at once, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you'. Alternatively the condition of not being there yet—or having been sent out of there—can be attributed to sin: mostly ours, but also theirs. Genesis 15:16 leaves Israel/Judah suspended, waiting, for several hundred years until the current residents' sins are 'full' (Gen 15:16). The argument that we need to wait until their sins are 'full' implies the need for justification, and therefore guilt ('We were only permitted to do this, to take this, because their sins were so very "full"'). The same undercurrent of guilt and justification surfaces, in a different way, in Genesis 9. Canaan's father Ham was relegated to the position of servant of his brothers because he committed a vague primordial sin against Noah. Clearly guilt and the need for justification motivate the construction of this tenuous 'because'. The taking of the land is as difficult to justify as to achieve. Here, in one solution, it is transformed into a sing-song etiology: a straightforward logic of cause and effect. Answering an insistent question of guilt and justice that is never asked directly, Jubilees claims that the Semites were only seeking righteous restitution for a prior dispossession because in fact *Canaan had first stolen the land of Shem*. In the Wisdom of Solomon, a bloody inventory of Canaanite crimes, including child sacrifice, is paraded as part of a divinely choreographed providence, designed to ensure that 'the land most precious of all to you/might receive a worthy colony of the servants

⁶² Cf. Sherwood, 'The Perverse Commitment to Overcrowding and Doubling in Genesis: Implications for Ethics and Politics' in Catherine Dell and Paul Joyce (eds.) *Biblical Interpretation and Method: Essays in Honour of Professor John Barton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 311–328.

of God' (12:7). Their sins were full indeed; full to overflowing with childrens' blood.

The Canaan event is one that is returned to, and retold, over and over again. It is as if the biblical corpus is attempting to settle on the final, most adequate form of justification, but is never satisfied, or as if it is guiltily revisiting the scene of a crime. This anxiety becomes even more intriguing when we realise that the 'Conquest' is a wish-fulfilment; a fantasy; an event that already co-exists with alternative versions and that never, in fact, took place. Though contemporary archaeology helps to reinforce this conclusion, it is also there on the surface of the texts. Reading Joshua with Franz Fanon, Cameron Howard argues that this is a mimetic work of colonial violence; a fantasy of the colonized in Persian-period Yehud.⁶³ Appropriately enough, the 'conquest' may be—just like 'the land' that resides in poetry, prophecy, pasts and futures—more a spectral projection than a fact on solid ground.

The Spanish Empire and its Bibles were equally conflicted in their take, and purchase, on the land. They shared the Bible's vexed sense of how to share the crowded land. And they shared its anxious consideration of the circumstances under which one can legitimately take land that belongs to someone else. Not yet settled or settled on the appropriate means of justification, the Bible of the Spanish empire kept trying out different positions, different laws, different interpretations of the law. As if developing hints in the Bible, 'conquest' became a very active question. In the copious textual archives of the Spanish empire, conquest appears as a fact and the subject of the most strident justifications—but also a source of guilt, an illusion, and something that should never have taken place.

The bombast of the Papal Bull and the *Requerimiento* might lead us to believe that this view of universal oneness dominated pre-modern time, brooking no rivals. In fact, the notion of the universal papal guardianship of the world occupied a relatively small sliver of time and never dominated, completely, at any time. First devised by Innocent IV in the thirteenth century and revived in legal discourse in mid-fifteenth century to ground Portuguese claims in Africa, the principle was resurrected in relation to the question of the Indies. The misleadingly monoglot assertion in fact co-existed with alternative traditions in canon law and very different realities of *Realpolitik*. In European courts familiar with intense power

⁶³ See Cameron B. R. Howard, 'The Conquest of Canaan as Fantasy of the Colonized: Reading Joshua with Fanon' (SBL Abstracts: 2011).

struggles between popes and sovereigns, the notion of 'universal papal authority' was activated and deactivated, as expedient. The 'universal' claim was, ironically, often temporarily and *locally* applied. Ferdinand and Isabella lost no sleep defending the Crown's right against Rome on other domestic issues, while simultaneously trading in past favours to gently force the Pope to issue a statement of universal Christian dominion in relation to the 'newly discovered' lands. Canon law scrupulously subdivided the category 'pagan', setting out appropriate rules of engagement or non-engagement for each category. Those who lived outside the Church but on lands that once fell within the Roman empire and thus came within the Church's *dominium* were subject to Christian rule *de jure*. Those who lived anywhere in the world but were lawfully subject to a Christian prince were subject to Christian rule *de facto*. But there were also those infidels—like the newly discovered 'Indians'—who dwelt in lands that were neither subject to Christian rule nor within the former boundaries of the Roman empire. And over these Christians had no legitimate jurisdiction.⁶⁴

Rather as quests to find the pristine ur-text of the Bible have collapsed into the manifest diversity of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient manuscripts, so we find that Christendom, not unlike its secular successor 'Europe', seems *less* stable the further we go back in time. Graham Ward writes:

While the Roman medieval church was extending both its powers and its territorial domain from the eleventh century to the sixteenth, it became increasingly aware of its own smallness. Not only did it encounter the imperial ambitions of the Ottoman Turks; it was aware that Islam created a cultural shield that separated the Christian West from the huge and mainly uncharted empire of the Mongols. The danger, as the church understood, was that the Mongols would be converted to Islam (which is what happened), further isolating globally the Christian enclave. As the voyages of discovery began and flourished in the fifteenth century, not only were other parts of the world that had not heard of Christ mapped, but also other forms of worship, other forms of piety, and other gods were encountered. The domestic heresies of the Waldensians and the Albigensians and the hybrid Christianities of the forced conversions of Jews and Muslims were mirrored and multiplied as the world grew larger. The intense missionizing, first by the Franciscans and Dominicans and then by the Jesuits, was in part a response to the recognition of the new understanding of global space and of

⁶⁴ Cf. Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986 [1982]), p. 37.

how small the church was within such a space; the church divided between East and West, whose papal power base waxed and waned as the political climate changed. Even before the Reformation's splintering, Christendom was an ideology only partially realized and internally contested. The church, then, is always to come.⁶⁵

Guy Stroumsa insists that 'early modern scholars'—and indeed early colonisers—'never forgot that the religious identity of Europe was manifold and always pointed eastward: the Muslim Turks were at the gates of Vienna, and the roots of Christianity were known to lie in Palestinian Judaism'.⁶⁶ This awareness was particularly acute on the Spanish peninsula, with the insistent presence of *marranos*, *moriscos*, Jews and 'new Christians' and intense antagonisms and proximities between Christian, 'Moor' and 'Turk'. As Walter Mignolo points out, 'Protestants in the north had been much less exposed to the variegated multiculturalism of the Mediterranean than Catholics in the south'.⁶⁷ Bartolomé de las Casas reeled off a whole list of lands and provinces that had slipped out the Church's dominion, including Constantinople, Rhodes, Hungary, Serbia, and Africa. *He also explicitly related the question of jurisdiction in the New World to a variegated 'Europe', which was not yet, or ever been one, or Christian.* The New World was like the old world in its mixedness. 'Rome, the bastion of the Christian religion, has Jews, as also do Germany and Bohemia. And Spain formerly had Saracens, who were commonly called Mudejars, whom we saw with our own eyes'.⁶⁸ Las Casas obligingly illustrates the truth of Stroumsa's observation: '... It was only later that the "Christian identity" of Europe would become a source of narcissistic self-satisfaction—a self-satisfaction now sometimes broadened to include its 'Judeo-Christian' or even "Abrahamic" roots'.⁶⁹ Like those other solid, blockish terms, 'the West', or 'Europe', the self-same solidity of 'the Christian'

⁶⁵ Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Post-Material Citizens* (London: SCM, 2009), p. 26.

⁶⁶ Guy G. Stroumsa, *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 36.

⁶⁷ Walter Mignolo, 'Introduction' to José de Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (ed. Jane E. Mangan; introduction and commentary Walter D. Mignolo; trans. Frances López-Morillas; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. xvii–xxviii (xxvi).

⁶⁸ Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians: The Defense of the Most Reverend Lord, Don Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, of the Order of Preachers, late Bishop of Chiapa, Against the Persecutors and Slanderers of the Peoples of the New World Discovered Across the Seas* (ed. and trans. Stafford Poole; DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), p. 78, p. 118.

⁶⁹ Stroumsa, *A New Science*, p. 37.

seems to have arrived much later than we suspected. Indeed, it is tempting to conclude that it was only established at the moment when it was already manifestly under threat. Perhaps it was only with the new pressures of multiculturalism or multireligionism and the advent of the 'secular' that we found ourselves invoking solid Christian foundations and imagining that our ancestors were secure in them (in order to contrast our insecurity with their security, and so define what it is to be 'modern'). Perhaps later eras can talk relatively easily about Christian or biblical 'foundations' because they have become so shapeless and vague.

The mixed constituencies and struggles of a Europe that was not yet confidently 'European' or 'Christian' can be seen, surprisingly enough, in, of all places, the *Requerimiento*: the document that works with biblical templates and asserts pure Christianity, with no space for anything or anyone else. The logic used was a departure from what we might think of as 'indigenous' Christian arguments (so to speak). Rather than relying on the traditional 'just war' tradition,⁷⁰ the *Requerimiento* created a biblicised adaptation of an Islamic ritual of Conquest.⁷¹ Even as it proclaimed the universal dominion of the Pope and Christendom, the *Requerimiento* did not even manage to be exclusively Christian. Europe/Spain's most iconic outside crept *inside* this manifesto of Christendom that claimed the whole world and appeared, for all the world, to be an exclusively Christian text.

Modelled on the Sunni *Mālikī* school of jurisprudence's interpretation of the legal requirements for military *jihad*, the *Requerimiento* was in fact a hybrid of Bible and Qur'an. The *Mālikī* school (the most ritualised form of Islamic jurisprudence) devised a stylised public ritual based on the injunction 'We have not been accustomed to punish until "We have sent a messenger"' in the Qur'an (Q:17:15). Prior to military incursion, an envoy was to be sent to 'summon' (*da'ā*: 'to invite', 'call for', 'implore', 'demand') the enemy to submission to 'Islam'. Arabic *da'ā* was translated as *requerir*: hence *Requerimiento*. Looking for a biblical parallel and precedent for this Islamic practice, Islamic jurists regularly cited Deuteronomy 20. Christians borrowed the Muslim ritual and the selection of Deuteronomy 20:10–15 as the best parallel to the principle laid out in the Qur'an.

⁷⁰ A traditional, more purely 'Christian' justification drew on Cicero, Augustine, and the 'just war' tradition. See Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London: Continuum, 2009), and Sherwood, 'Francisco de Vitoria's More Excellent Way'.

⁷¹ The following argument is based on Seed, 'A Protocol for Conquest.'

The *Requerimiento* was, then, a little foreign, *unheimlich*, *morisco* or *marrano*. In this respect it was exactly like the Bible which served as its template, and which carried its outside on its inside, for example in inter-marriage of major characters such as David and Solomon and the manifest worship of 'other' gods (condemned and not). The *Requerimiento* not only mimicked the hybridity of impurely 'biblical' traditions. It followed biblical words at the level of 'reception'. The rather gentle word 'reception' implies a far more tranquil model of passing on than that recorded for biblical words inside the Bible itself. A regular, if not defining, characteristic of the word or command of God is that it will be found repugnant, absurd, and will be rejected, even by its own prophets (Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah).⁷² As if perversely documenting the constant presence of rival groups, the 'truth' proclaimed by the Bible presents itself as perpetually resisted or mocked.

Earlier I explored how the *Requerimiento* grounded itself on the authority of script and the scriptural. It repackaged, channeled and justified violence by appealing to those ultimate ciphers of authority: the pen of the notary and the voice of the god. But the *Requerimiento* also mimicked another feature of biblical words that is often forgotten as the Bible is assumed to function as a cipher of 'authority'. Contra the narrative of fundamentalism, a common intrinsic feature of the 'word of God' as reported in the Bible is that it fails, and is laughed at, and is deemed absurd.

Absurdity, failure and (black) humour also dominate in the documentation of the 'reception history' of the *Requerimiento*. In this respect, too, it slavishly followed the biblical word. The navigator and geographer Martín Fernández de Enciso (1470–1528) who fully endorsed the logic of the *Requerimiento*, nevertheless reported some subversive textual 'reception' at the hand of a local leader, or *cacique*. As a suspiciously good monotheist (and, one suspects, at least in part an idealised Spanish projection), Enciso's *cacique* fully accepted 'the part about there being one God who ruled heaven and earth'. But then, bursting out of ventriloquized stereotype and seeming to speak in his own voice, he added 'as for the pope who gave away lands that he didn't own, he must have been drunk; and a king who asked for and acquired such a gift must have been crazy'.⁷³ Speaking both a script given to him by others—and in what could plausibly be his

⁷² On rejection and even revulsion as the hallmark of the divine word, see Sherwood, *Biblical Blaspheming*, pp. 127–77 and pp. 275–303.

⁷³ Fernández de Enciso, *Suma geografía* (Seville: 1519) cit. Hanke *All Mankind is One*, p. 37 (no page number given).

own voice—the cacique reminds me of those strangely split others in the Prophets. He is therefore curiously biblical, even as, and indeed because, he resists (at least in part) the message of the Christian Bible. As he parrots what the author wants him to say and also breaks out and causes trouble, he reminds me of those recalcitrant biblical others like Gomer/Israel, Hosea's errant wife.⁷⁴

We might expect a resistant 'reception' for the *Requerimiento* from indigenous leaders. More surprising is the awkwardness, anxiety, and downright rebellion expressed by Spanish conquistadores, theologians, jurists and friars. In disdain for the Indian and/or disdain for the document (as no more than empty legal mumbo jumbo), 'Captains muttered its theological phrases into their beard on the edge of sleeping Indian settlements, or even a league away before starting the formal attack' or 'read it to trees and empty huts when no Indians were to be found'.⁷⁵ The Dominican Francisco de Vitoria (c. 1492–1546), Chair of Theology at the University of Salamanca, picked apart the ludicrously vague clause 'if you do not do this, and *maliciously make delay in it*, I certify to you that, with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country . . . etc.'. How long precisely was one to be given to a) digest and b) accept the universal dominion of a religion that one had never heard of? A few minutes? A day? Long enough to learn the language? Long enough for the conquistadores to learn the Indians' language(s)? At what point would delay begin to count as 'malicious' and intentional, rather than accidental and circumstantial? What allowance, if any, was to be made for the fact that 'the barbarians do not even understand what it is the Spaniards are asking of them' and the 'request is made by armed men, who surround a fearful and defenceless crowd'?⁷⁶

Even if, by some miracle, the Indians were able to tune in to this bizarre Spanish transmission, the whole exercise would still be a travesty of the proper understanding of 'belief' since 'Fear and ignorance . . . vitiate any freedom of election'.⁷⁷ Coercion generates nothing more than 'belief' in heavily inverted commas: the mere performance of belief to save one's

⁷⁴ For Gomer as a projected caricature, but also as figure that exceeds capture, and betrays real syncretism and resistance, see Sherwood, *The Prostitute and the Prophet: Hosea's Marriage in Literary-Theoretical Perspective* (JSOTSup 212; Gender, Culture Theory 2; Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. and cl. 348 pp. Reprinted as *The Prostitute and the Prophet: Reading Hosea in the Late Twentieth Century* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

⁷⁵ Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice*, p. 34.

⁷⁶ Vitoria, 'On the American Indians', p. 276.

⁷⁷ Vitoria, 'On the American Indians', p. 276.

skin. Belief is an act of will and will is a domain beyond mere possession. By the same logic, Vitoria and his fellow Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas argue that Indian territory is outside Christendom and the possession of the Spanish. You cannot crash in and conquer the domain of will.⁷⁸

Vitoria revived the canon law classifications which placed the Indians outside biblical-Christian jurisdiction, thereby damning the *Requerimiento* and the Papal Bull as new (unconvincing and unthought) innovations, rather than appeals to ancient tradition. He insisted that there was a realm of inviolable Indian *dominium* that could not be broken by brandishing either natural law or a piece of biblical text.⁷⁹ The point was made even more stridently by Bartolomé de Las Casas:

No judge pronounces sentence outside his borders. The king of France does not pronounce sentence in Spain nor does the king of Spain dictate laws for France... jurisdiction is said to be implanted in a locality or territory, or in the bones of the persons of each community or state, so that it cannot be separated from them any more than food can be separated from the preservation of life.⁸⁰

Responding to the mixed/*morisco* provenance of the *Requerimiento*, both Vitoria and Las Casas separated the truly Christian from what they saw as the *Arabic/Moorish/Saracen* (and, in Las Casas's case, also Jewish) template of 'Conquest' and 'Crusade'. Pointedly, Las Casas asked:

Dear reader, what language will the messengers speak so as to be understood by the Indians. Latin, Greek, Spanish, Arabic? The Indians know none of these languages. Perhaps we imagine that the soldiers are so holy that Christ will grant them the gift of tongues so that they will be understood by the Indians? Then what deadline will they be given to come to their senses. Perhaps, like the forty monks Saint Gregory sent to convert the English, they

⁷⁸ Vitoria, 'On Dietary Laws, or Self-Restraint' (*De usu ciborum, sive temperantia*) (1538) in Vitoria, *Political Writings* (ed. Pagden and Lawrance), pp. 205–32 (218).

⁷⁹ The term *dominium* is wide-ranging, extending beyond one's private property and goods (*bona*) to actions, liberty, and even (with some qualifications) one's own body. See Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination: Studies in European and Spanish-American Social and Political Theory 1513–1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 14. Vitoria's insistence on Indian *dominium* does not mean that the New World is closed to outsiders. As I explore in more detail in another article ('Francisco de Vitoria's More Excellent Way'), Vitoria pioneers a more humane—truly, gently *Christian*—justification of empire, based on hospitality, friendship and trade. The revelation that the argument from hospitality and trade was pioneered by *Spanish* theologians upsets the familiar contrasts between the Spanish empire (bloody, retro-'feudal' and crusading), and later Protestant empires, including the British empire, built on more 'modern' models of emancipation and the freeflow of goods, love and trade.

⁸⁰ Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, p. 83.

will spend their time in fasting and prayer, so that the Lord will be pleased to open the eyes of the Indians to receive the truth and give up such crimes. Or, rather, will not the soldiers hope with all their hearts that the Indians will become so blind that they will neither see nor hear? And then the soldiers will have the excuse they want for robbing them and taking them captive. Anyone who would foolishly and very unrealistically expect soldiers to follow the first course knows nothing about the military mind.⁸¹

The choice of languages (Latin, Greek, Spanish *or Arabic*), is far from accidental. Elsewhere, Las Casas condemned the notion of conquest as 'tyrannical, Mohammedan, abusive, improper and infernal',⁸² so damning the *Requerimiento* by association with Arabic and the Qur'an. As he placed the *Requerimiento* firmly in foreign space, so he pushed it into foreign time. Drawing on the split times inside the Christian Bible and, particularly, the supersessionary logic of the New Testament, Las Casas placed the *Requerimiento* in the temporal outside on the Bible's inside. If the biblical New Start is ambiguously appreciative, and dismissive, of the Old Foundation, Las Casas drew on the strand sequestering the old Jewish time firmly in the past. The case of Canaan was a 'special and rigorous precept', quarantined within very particular (local, 'Jewish') reasons.⁸³ It had long passed its use-by-date. It would be ludicrous to attempt to access it from Christian 'now'. 'To argue from the idolaters living in the Promised Land to other idolaters, especially after the coming of Christ, is absurd'.⁸⁴

Las Casas then bolstered his argument by drawing on biblical figures of time going in the other direction: from plenitude to collapse. To describe the effect of the devastating logic of the *Requerimiento*, he drew on images of vineyards collapsing back into wilderness, where wild and esoteric animals prowl. Stringing biblical passages together, these images of entropy were connected to the statement in Deut 7:22 that God would clear away the others 'little by little' for 'you may not make an end of them at once, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you'. *Thus Las Casas strategically used the Bible's attempts to explain and justify the always partial occupation of the land.* Deuteronomy 7:22 effectively counsels a wiser and more cautious policy of colonisation. One should leave the people and resources in place, or partly in place. This is not for their own sake but because

⁸¹ Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, pp. 217–18.

⁸² Las Casas, memorandum of 1542, cit. Anthony Pagden, 'Introduction', to Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (ed. and trans. Nigel Griffin; London: Penguin, 1992) pp. xiii–xli (xxxix).

⁸³ Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, pp. 107–12. See esp. pp. 107–8 and p. 110.

⁸⁴ Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, pp. 107–12. See esp. pp. 107–8 and p. 110.

sudden ends, though tempting, cut off viable futures. It can also be read as one attempt of many to explain why the Israelites do not (yet) fully possess the land. Las Casas re-reads this explanation as a prophecy of what will happen should the Spaniards implement, to the letter and beyond the letter, what they (mis)read as a biblical mandate. By ironically carrying out the law of *herem* even more rigorously than the Old Testament, the Spaniards would find themselves left alone in the wild wastelands of Deuteronomy 7:22. Carry out an extermination policy on these lines, and one will be left with only 'tigers, lions, and wild beasts' as potential 'subjects' for the Kings of Spain'.⁸⁵ The Bible speaks on a divine and human level, in the language of predestination and Realpolitik. The biblical prophecy carries the weight of divine prediction (and punishment), but it is also a statement of cause and effect.

Francisco de Vitoria also attacked the Canaan mandate. He sabotaged what he called the 'seven unjust justifications' which included the claim that God had 'delivered [the 'barbarians'] into the hands of the Spaniards just as he once delivered the Canaanites into the hands of the Jews (Num 21:3)'.⁸⁶ Isolating and historicising the case of Canaan and, in this sense, *parochialising* and *localising* the Bible, he insisted, not unlike Las Casas, that the Conquest model was exceptional, singular; definitely not recyclable. The incident was particular, peculiar and, it was implied, regrettable. The text could not be condemned directly, because it was biblical. But it could be subjected to inner-biblical attack, and sequestered, temporally and spatially, as a long way from the Bible's current, core, and universal truths. Like Las Casas, Vitoria reiterated that the mandate was limited to one particular piece of land. It was confined in space. It was also deeply problematic in terms of time. The Requerimiento seemed to imply, absurdly, that belief should be instantaneous. But the 'barbarians' were surely 'not bound to believe from the first moment that the Christian faith is announced to them'—and this on the good authority of the words of Ecclesiasticus/Sirach: 'Being too ready to trust' is a mark of the 'light-headed man', and 'shows shallowness of mind' (Ecclesiasticus/Sirach 19:4).⁸⁷ What if '*the Saracens* were to preach their own sect in this simple way to the barbarians at the same time as the Christians?' asked Vitoria. Would we want the barbarians to be 'obliged to believe the Saracens'

⁸⁵ Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, p. 19.

⁸⁶ Vitoria, 'On the American Indians', p. 276.

⁸⁷ Vitoria, 'On the American Indians', pp. 269–70.

with the same kind of robotic automaticity that the *Requerimiento* seems to expect?⁸⁸ This was not the first or last time that a European thinker would attempt to exploit the danger of fast-multiplying, mass-produced Muslims, or conjure the spectre of the 'Saracen' to coerce Christian doctrine and self-identity into a more desirable and 'progressive' shape.

Francisco de Vitoria and Bartolomé de Las Casas were participants in the 'prolix juridical-theological discussions'⁸⁹ regularly staged on the mainland, particularly in the first half of the sixteenth century, prior to a more rigidly self-aggrandising and self-justifying narrative that hardened with Spain's economic and military decline. Vitoria weighed into these debates uninvited, giving controversial unlicensed lectures provoked by reports of the massacre at Cajamarca and the assassination of Inca Atahualpa in 1533. Las Casas was the invited public disputant in the most famous of the juntas or public acts of 'ritual legitimization'⁹⁰ staged by the Crown in 1550. His opponent was the humanist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, paraded by Mark Brett (and mentioned at the beginning of this paper) for the kind of associations between the 'barbarians' and homunculi, children, women and monkeys' that stereotypes of Empire lead us to expect.⁹¹ The debates were wide-ranging, trying out a broad range of scriptural grounds, and, in the process, highlighting all the fissures in the biblical. They were also haunted by a sense of needing to justifying the unjustifiable, forgive the unforgiveable, legalise the illegal, and script or pre-script the unprecedented, not least by giving it a quasi-legal hearing through the sounding board of various biblical texts.

Declamations of empire should not be taken independently of the conditions of their mediation and transmission. The Bible of the Spanish Empire was not, and could not be, a 'Telegraph Bible'. When working at the level of 'reception' we should give the same kind of attention to questions of context, mediation and manuscript evidence that biblical scholars attempt to give to biblical texts. Tempting though it is to quote bombastic statements about 'barbarians' or 'homunculi' in a vacuum and allow the clear moral lesson to resonate, in the case of Sepúlveda we have clear evidence that his words were staunchly resisted at source. His arguments

⁸⁸ Vitoria, 'On the American Indians', pp. 269–70.

⁸⁹ Juan Friede, 'Las Casas and Indigenism in the Sixteenth Century', in Juan Friede and Benjamin Keen (eds.) *Bartolomé de las Casas in History: Towards an Understanding of the Man and His Work*, p. 129.

⁹⁰ Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance, 'Introduction', in Pagden and Lawrence (ed.), *Francisco de Vitoria, Political Writings*, pp. xiii–xxviii (xvii).

⁹¹ See note 1 above.

were given a public airing in 1550 in the public debate with Las Casas. But the university faculties of Alcalá and Salamanca staunchly resisted the publication of the manuscript that prompted Las Casas's refutation and precipitated the public debate. The chief source for Sepúlveda's arguments is Las Casas's *Apologia*, where the words were roughly laid out, like skittles, in order to be knocked down. The frequent printing of Sepúlveda's slogans implies a continuity of print authority since the 1550's. We conveniently forget that these words were refused, precisely, the authority of print.

Sepúlveda's texts also bear, on their surface, an acute consciousness of the opposition. They exert themselves against the strength of the opposition. In this respect they are very like portions of the Bible, for example the prophetic texts. His *Democrates Alter sive de iusticiis belli causis apud Indios* ('Concerning the just cause of the war against the Indians') stages a debate between Demócrates, a ventriloquist for Sepúlveda, and 'Leopoldo', who rehearses the positions of figures like Vitoria and Las Casas. 'Leopoldo' has just returned from a conversation with Cortés in the palace of Prince Philip—perhaps recalling the moment where Las Casas accosted Cortés and accused him to his face. Democrates/ Sepúlveda must answer a barrage of anxious statements such as:

These events [in the Indies] surprised me mightily because of their grandeur and novelty and for being so unexpected; but thinking about them further, I was seized by a doubt, to wit, whether it was congruous with justice and Christian charity that the Spaniards should have made war on those innocent mortals who had caused them no harm.

and

War against the barbarians, as I understand it, is not even undertaken with good intentions, since those who have started it have no other aim than that of acquiring, by right or wrong, the largest possible amount of gold and silver...

and

At first sight, it is true, we may readily suppose that, since the affair is in the hands of men both learned and good, everything has been conducted with rectitude and justice. But when we hear subsequently of bloody massacres and of innocent individuals pillaged of their possessions and dominions, there are grounds for doubting the justice of what has been done.⁹²

⁹² I consulted the English translation at <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/sepulved.htm> (accessed April 2012).

On the page, 'Leopoldo' can be subjected to the kind of verbal pummeling that Socrates dishes out to his opponents. Then, firmly squashed, he can be dismissed as a German 'Lutheran'—a *Protestant*—and, moreover, someone who is also squeamish about the conquest of the Turks and Moors: hence completely beyond the pale. But the sheer force of polemic that has to be hurled at him is revealing. The fantasy of the absolute conquest of one's opponents is rather like the biblical fantasies of pure Yhwhism or pure Paulinism. Off the page, the arguments of the 'Indianists' or the 'unjustifiers' were much harder to quell.

The Strategic Use of the Crowded Bible to Restrict the Dominion of Christendom and Spain

As the heterogeneous Bible resists templates of 'Bible', so the early Spanish empire resists generalisations drawn from other Empires. As critics such as Walter Mignolo, Jorge Klor de Alva, Viviana Díaz-Balsera and Rolena Adorno insist, these early, experimental negotiations with the 'alien' are themselves alien because the 'discourse of oppositionality both from the colonizer and the colonized . . . does not materialize after the fact of colonialism, but is contemporary to it' and because 'The subaltern subject, cultural translations, oral and written traditions, margin-center relations, have been on the front burner in Latin America since the nineteenth century, if not the colonial period itself'.⁹³ The Bible, unexpectedly, became a forum for this 'discourse of oppositionality'; a stage for arguments that were not just self-critical, but even stubbornly committed to self-harm, and attacking the 'Spanish' cause. There were myriad 'colonial' Bibles, including 'thin Bibles' and 'fat Bibles': Bibles that were strictly self-limiting; and world-gorging Bibles that took the whole world (including the newly added New World) as their domain.

As if carrying out the threats of Yhwh in Lev 8:28, Francisco de Vitoria went to surprising lengths to 'vomit' the Spaniards out of the land that they called, presumptuously, 'New Spain'. This bulimic and biblical expulsion was performed in two lectures called 'On the American Indians' (1539) and appropriately (given our dietary metaphor) 'On Dietary Laws and Self-Restraint' (1538). Vitoria's Bible was self-restraining and self-limiting. It was crosshatched with *boundaries*. It kept insisting on the division of the

⁹³ Viviana Díaz Balsera, *The Pyramid Under the Cross: Franciscan Discourses of Evangelization and the Nahua Christian Subject in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), p. 10, p. 163.

world into 'various countries and kingdoms' (Genesis 10). It was emphatic about such matters as the partition of land between Abraham and Lot (Genesis 13) and the description of Sennacherib, Pharoah, Nebuchadnezzar as legitimate non-Israelite kings. Vitoria's Bible was emphatically crowded—not just as an accident of contingency (because that world was crowded) but as an expression of true morality and politics. As evidenced by Tobit, who ordered a stolen kid to be returned to the pagans (Tobit 2:11–14), or David who, despite persecution and major symptoms of madness, still honoured Saul as his 'master', Vitoria's Bible clearly insisted that there was no arguing with the borders of another jurisdiction or the domain of another 'king'.⁹⁴

Vitoria presented a 'fat' Bible that sprawled into all areas of knowledge. He allowed the esoteric idioms of the Bible to spill, without limits, over all disciplines. In stark contrast to the late British empire with its properly devolved, independent (non-biblical and non-Christian) vocabulary of 'dominions', 'colonies', 'protectorates', 'mandates' and 'territories'—Vitoria wrote as if what Tobit did with his kid could actually tell us something about the actual legal status of frontiers. But he did so, paradoxically, to insist on a Bible that is self-limiting and self-restricting, and that squeezes itself within its own Christian frontiers. By insisting on the borders within its own pages, this Bible created an opening for the *legitimate* laws (*ius civile*) of other peoples, outside the Christian Bible's surveillance/supervision.

To translate into modern terminology of 'centre' and 'periphery', we could say that Vitoria permitted independence from the Israelite/Christian centre, even though that centre was 'the locus of the sacred, the order which confers legitimacy'.⁹⁵ He found time and space for 'peripherality' and attenuated 'attachment' to the centre. Moreover, he saw this drama of attenuated attachment on display within the very centrepiece of authority: the Bible itself.

Las Casas' Bible was similarly dominated by a core principle of non-domination. For him, the true spirit of the Bible was somewhat introverted, summarised in Paul's rhetorical question 'For what have I to do with those also that are without?'; Deuteronomy's sombre warning 'A curse on him who displaces his neighbour's boundary mark'; and 'Solomon's' prohibition 'Remove not the ancient boundary/landmark which your fathers

⁹⁴ Vitoria, 'On the American Indians', pp. 242, 244.

⁹⁵ Shils, 'Centre and Periphery', p. 120, as above.

have set' (1 Cor 5:12; Deut 27:17; Prov 22:28).⁹⁶ This irenic textual trinity was supported by the lessons of grammar. Attacking the obsequious biblical pillars that propped up the logic of the Bull and *Requerimiento*, he insisted that whenever we read a biblical passage such as the decree that the 'whole world' should be taxed, or the proclamation 'At the name of Jesus every knee should bow' (Luke 2:1; Phil 2:8–10), we should remember our grammar. We should recall, in particular, the device known as *superlatio* or ὑπερβολή, as a form of 'throwing beyond'.⁹⁷ And we should always remember that 'universal' is merely 'a hyperbole', 'hyperbole', 'a grammatical figure', a 'way of speaking', a 'figure of speech'.⁹⁸ This is an early epiphany of 'the Bible as literature', a few centuries prior to its usual birthdates.⁹⁹ Crucially, this invention of 'the Bible as literature' was led by *politics*. The desire for to stem the tide of violence led Las Casas to stress the self-consciously literary as a viable alternative to what, as a good Dominican, he denounced as a doggedly 'Protestant' adherence to the letter of the text. The literary—as opposed to literal truth—was used quite explicitly to restrain 'murders, spoilations, plunderings, and scandals'—atrocities that found their ground in a too literal-'Lutheran' reading of the biblical text.¹⁰⁰

In Vitoria and Las Casas's strategically reworked Bibles, the Bible emphasised the outside on its inside. Canaan was a local case, a one-off, and safely sequestered in the past. Using models of time and space from within the Bible, the Bible, or aspects of the Bible, were strategically confined in time and space. Inner-biblical claims to 'universality' were, technically speaking, an exaggeration. They were not exactly a lie; but nor were they truth in the literal sense. We glimpse here some early apparitions of 'the Bible as literature' and 'the Bible as history', and even the 'secularisation' of the Bible that characterises modern biblical scholarship and that is widely assumed to be an 'Enlightenment' effect. The act of making the Bible history, and making the Bible literature, began in the

⁹⁶ Vitoria 'On the American Indians', p. 260; Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, pp. 63, 84.

⁹⁷ ὑπερ-βολή is a compound of ὑπέρ ('over and above', 'beyond', 'more than') and βολή ('to throw').

⁹⁸ Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, p. 145.

⁹⁹ The history of literary readings of the Bible can clearly be pushed back further than the 1970's, or even Lowth's *On the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*. Cf. Robert Alter, 'Literature', in Ronald Hendel (ed.) *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 13–27.

¹⁰⁰ Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, pp. 19, 113.

colonial 'encounter'. And they arose from questions of law and politics. First came the necessity; the force of what must, or should, happen in the so-called 'New World'. Then 'literary' or 'historical' reworkings of the Bible emerged as side-effects.

Adapted Parables of the Sower and the Vineyard: Bleak Figures of Ungrounded 'Possession' and Unstable Ground

Several factors placed the Spanish empire worlds away from the late British empire. It was haunted by opposition; it was unsettled on grounds for justification; it was unable to consolidate meanings or systems of governance with anything like the same degree of confidence; and *it was plagued by undeniable and virtually instantaneous failure* as microbes and violence decimated indigenous populations. The catastrophe helped to generate a very particular, and peculiar, colonial Bible: a Bible obsessed with tropes of shifting ground, rootlessness, failing crops and vineyards; and a Bible that spoke, or wailed, in tones of mourning and lament.

Take, for example, the dark transposition of the parable of the sower by the Franciscan friar and early 'anthropologist' Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590) in his massive twelve book encyclopaedia of indigeneous life known as the *Florentine Codex* or *The General History of the Things of New Spain*. In a section devoted to the various mountains, valleys, marshes, gorges and roads of Mesoamerica, Sahagún makes a detour into allegory: 'I consider this the proper place to deal with the roads by which the Church has come to arrive at this final abode where it now travels sowing the evangelical doctrine'.¹⁰¹ The meandering path that follows unravels the gains and ground of 'Christendom', and transplants the parable of the sower to the arid land of the New World. The progress of the Church crumbles away sentence by sentence, statement by statement, as the Church moves, hounded, across the globe:

The Church left Palestine and now the infidels live, reign, and hold dominion in Palestine. From there it went to Asia in which there are now nothing but Turks and Moors. It went to Africa where, now, there are no Christians. It went to Germany where, now, there are none but heretics. It went to Europe where, in the greater part thereof, the Church is not obeyed. Where

¹⁰¹ Bernardino de Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex* (ed. and trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson, and Charles E. Dibble; Santa Fe, N. M.; Salt Lake City: School of American Research; University of Utah, 1950–1982), vol. 11 ('Earthly Things'), p. 93.

it now has its more tranquil seat is Italy and Spain, whence, crossing the ocean, it has arrived in these regions of the Western Indies, where there was a diversity of peoples and languages, many of which have already become extinct. And those which remain are on the road to extinction. And this New Spain has been and is the most populated and best settled of all the Western Indies. That which now predominates more and has splendour is Mexico and its territory, where the Catholic Church is established and tranquil. *But, as regards the Catholic faith, it is a sterile land and very laborious to cultivate, where the Catholic faith has very shallow roots, and with much labor little fruit is produced, and from little cause that which is planted and cultivated withers.*

It seems to me that the Catholic Faith can endure little time in these parts. One thing is that the people are becoming extinct with great rapidity, not so much from the bad treatment accorded them as from the plagues God sends them. Since this land was discovered there have been three very general and extensive plagues...¹⁰²

Imagining how biblical parables of planting might take to the New World, we might imagine something closer to the Dominican friar Diego Durán's (1537–1588) chilling sermon against syncretism: 'Fields of grain and fruit trees do not prosper on uncultivated rocky soil, covered with brambles and brush, unless all roots and stumps are eradicated', and we can never reveal the 'True God' to them 'until the heathen ceremonies and false cults of their counterfeit deities are erased'.¹⁰³ Instead, Sahagún fused the gospel parable with a dark riff on the tropes of *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii* (the 'transfer of knowledge or learning' and the 'transfer of empire' or the 'transfer of rule'). The *translatio studii* was a celebrated *topos* in medieval literature. Traditionally the light of learning travelled from Eden to Jerusalem to Babylon to Athens to Rome to Paris, following the path of the sun. Chrétien de Troyes's *Cliges* (c. 1170) recounts knowledge's voyages from Greece, the seat of all knowledge, to Rome, to France, where, 'by the grace of God, it shall forever remain forever more'.¹⁰⁴ The optimistic voyage generated a pessimistic counter-voyage: the *translatio stultitiae*, the transfer of stupidity, most famously expressed in Erasmus's *In Praise of*

¹⁰² Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, vol. 11, p. 93.

¹⁰³ Diego Durán, *Book of the Gods and Rites and The Ancient Calendar* (trans. and ed. Fernando Horcasitas and Doris Heyden; foreword by Miguel León-Portilla; Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), p. 51.

¹⁰⁴ Chrétien de Troyes, *Cliges* (c. 1170), accessed on <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2414>.

Folly (1511).¹⁰⁵ In Sahagún's fusion of the *translatio stultitiae*, the *translatio imperii* and the parable of the sower, the westward expansion of truth and empire was transformed into sardonic metaphor of Christian truth/empire as fugitive, chased out by the darkness of nightfall that reconquers the victories of the sun.

Sahagún's parable *amplifies* the degree of failure in the biblical original. In the gospels, the sower's seed is eaten by birds, killed by rocks, or choked by thorns or weeds (cf. Mark 4; Matt 13). Some seed (though a minority) falls on good ground. But the parable is reassuring insofar as where the crops fail there are clear reasons: rocks, birds and weeds. In this darker transposition, there is no good soil or safe space. There is no clear causation. Yield and labour seem to be in inverse relation. The crops seem to wither from 'little cause'. There is massive and inexplicable waste.

By replanting the parable of the sower on Mesoamerican ground, Sahagún evokes a fragile mission built on sand. We could not be further from the invocation of the Bible as solid ground and foundation for Conquest, as in the divine gift of the title deeds to Canaan. The Bible gives no solid substratum on which to construct self-evident 'facts on the ground'. On the contrary, the Bible is used to document the destruction of the 'Indians', who are the material of evangelisation; evangelisation's ground. The people are 'becoming extinct with great rapidity'.¹⁰⁶ Extinction here is no hyperbole. By the 1540's, one of the first twelve clerics to have arrived in 1524, Fray Toribio de Benavente (also known as *Motolinia*, 'the poor/afflicted one') estimated that the afflictions of 'war, plague and famine' together with the Spanish exploitation of labour, had killed off a third of the native population.¹⁰⁷ Since waves of smallpox, measles, typhus, war and exploitation had snatched away the objects of evangelisation before the gospel could 'take', the gospel had, quite literally, lost its ground.

Sahagún's parable is haunted by the loss of the material substratum in another sense. There is no permanence to the very paper on which he writes. Throughout the work we feel the encroaching threat to the very

¹⁰⁵ Erasmus popularised the concept first used by the Italian humanist Faustino Perisauli in his *De Triumpho Stultitiae*.

¹⁰⁶ Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, vol. 11 ('Earthly Things'), p. 93.

¹⁰⁷ Brading, *The First America*, pp. 107–8. By the 1620's the Indian population of central Mexico would reach just three percent of the total on the eve of conquest. See Serge Gruzinski, *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World* (trans. Eileen Corrigan; Oxford: Polity, 1993) p. 146.

archive that he is attempting to compile. The *Florentine Codex* or *The General History of the Things of New Spain* was a gargantuan encyclopaedia comprising 2400 pages and over 2000 illustrations drawn by indigenous artists. The purpose of this hugely ambitious and deeply controversial project was to save indigenous voices and practices to the hard-drive of writing. 'This work is like a dragnet to bring to light all the words of this language with their exact and metaphorical meanings, and all their ways of speaking, and most of their ancient practices, the good and evil,' Sahagún proclaimed.¹⁰⁸ The project was deeply controversial, opposed by many contemporaries who saw Christian salvation as the obliteration of pre-Christian practices, and who believed that it was impious to 'save' indigenous peoples and practices even as archive or text. Sahagún opposed these views from within the Bible. In a strategic use of Jeremiah 5 (a text he read as the invasion of the Mexica-Judeans by the Spanish-Babylonians) he enlisted God's support for his project of cultural salvage by quoting his statement that he never desired a 'full end' (Jer 5:18). Ingeniously, this was read as, effectively, a divine command to produce an archive that saved Indian practices and rites as a textual remnant. But the justification also had dark connotations. A culture that was not to be completely ended (by divine command) was placed in the permanent state of teetering on the edge of 'the end'.

Sahagún's dragnet metaphor implies an attempt to capture the dust of a world already slipping between his fingers. And even as he wrote, he mourned the 'burial' of his script 'underneath the earth and even under ashes.'¹⁰⁹ It is as if the very paper is disappearing from underneath him. And indeed it was. Like those ghostly biblical books such as the Book of Yasher or the Book of the Wars of the Lord, it fell to the censors and Sahagún records this process even as he writes.¹¹⁰ Sahagún's massive work would find itself buried in the bowels/coffins of the Medicean-Laurentian Library in Florence from which it would not re-emerge (as 'the Florentine

¹⁰⁸ Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, vol. 1, p. 47.

¹⁰⁹ Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España* (Edición y estudios de Angel M. Garibay; 4 vols; México: Editorial Porrúa, 1956), p. 15, cit. and trans. Rolena Adorno, *The Polemics of Possession in Spanish America Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 212.

¹¹⁰ The *General History* was confiscated by the Council of the Indies in 1577 when Philip II prohibited all archives of pre-Hispanic pasts, lest idolatrous practices be preserved. In an ordinance of 22 April 1577, Philip ordered Viceroy Martin Enriquez to forbid 'any person to write things having to do with the superstitions and the ways of life of the natives in any language' (quoted in Georges Baudot, *Utopia and History in Mexico: The First Chronicles of Mexican Civilisation, 1520–1569* [trans. Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano, Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1995], p. 500).

Codex'), until the late eighteenth century. If, as Roger Chartier notes, late medieval European writers were anxious about the perishability of 'stone, wood, fabric, parchment and paper' and the endurance of the 'mission of the written', a writer like Sahagún has a far more acute sense of the 'mission of the written' and the constant threat of 'loss'.¹¹¹ Strikingly, and perhaps surprisingly, the Bible became a sounding-board or echo chamber for the annihilation of his project, and the people it attempted to archive. Poignant figures of dead seed, arid land, the 'remnant' and the almost annihilated 'end' assembled, sonorously, around the black hole of loss.

That other complex, multilayered biblical figure—the *vineyard*—was also used to evoke the wastelands of the land christened 'New Spain'. Appeals to the 'vineyard' might appear to stretch idealised, pastoral-biblical simplicity over a complex landscape. The vineyard seems to promise fecundity, plenitude, richness, stability, harvest: lands flowing with wine and converts and milk and honey, as in fantasies of the 'promised land'. But in the Hebrew Bible, the vineyard is a very mixed trope of space and time with a range of connotations, and some of them are extremely dark. Biblical vineyards can certainly function as a sign of fecundity and security. Economically vital, they required several years of undisturbed cultivation.¹¹² They can therefore serve as a promise of stability for a people on the move. Having a vineyard is often placed in parallel with having a house (see for e.g. Jer 35:7). This connotation is indeed taken up in early colonial discourse. In his encomium to travel and discovery, *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1613), the English clergyman Samuel Purchas dangled before the would-be discoverer the reward of 'houses which our works builded not, and vineyards which our merits planted not' (cf Deut 6:11; Josh 24:13; Jer 35:7).¹¹³ As with the biblical 'conquerors' who are exhorted to kill the inhabitants but leave the vines and olives or the 'trees that produce food' (Deut 20:20), the vineyard can serve as a figure for prefabricated/pre-planted structures, presented to us as if giftwrapped by God.

But 'the vineyard' also signals land that is vulnerable and unpredictable: yielding or unyielding, and susceptible to supplantings and seizures

¹¹¹ Roger Chartier, *Inscription and Erasure: Literature and Written Culture from the Eleventh to the Eighteenth Century* (trans. Arthur Goldhammer; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. 1.

¹¹² Cf. Philip J. King, *Amos, Hosea, Micah: An Archaeological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), pp. 117–18.

¹¹³ Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus, or, Purchas his Pilgrimes; containing a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travels by Englishmen and Others* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905–7 [1613]), 20 volumes, vol. 1, pp. 179–80.

of land. Naboth's vineyard is stolen by the already land-rich sovereigns Ahab and Jezebel. A man who leaves a vineyard in order to travel is at the mercy of bad tenants, who take over the vineyard and murder anyone who comes to collect the dues owed to the owner (Mark 12, Luke 20). (The Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, Charles V and Philip II would not have found it difficult to relate to the problem of retaining control over distant lands.) A vineyard is particular type of land: one that is particularly prone to sink back into wilderness, even to the point where it turns into the setting for bleak apocalyptic, full of thorns, thistles and the wildest and strangest of animals; a place where jackals, ostriches, satyrs, owls and Lilith, the night hag, screech and howl (Isa 34:14; cf. Jer 50:39). The vine and the olive go together as signs of fecundity and prosperity—and also as God's explicit targets when he decides to make Israel a no-People, or non-Kingdom (cf. Isa 34:12). In Joel 1:11–12, the vinedressers wail because the harvest has perished, the vine withers and the fig tree languishes. In Isa 32:12, the prophet charges us to 'beat upon your breasts for the pleasant fields/for the fruitful vine/for the soil of my people'. In the 'song of the vineyard' in Isaiah 5, dreams of cultivation and prosperity collapse into devastation: wilderness, bloodshed, thorns and briers.

It is this model of biblical land, rather than the Canaan mandate, that the Franciscan missionary Jerónimo de Mendieta (1525–1604) summons to lament 'The vineyard is burning, and there is little left . . . before it will be totally lost.'¹¹⁴ In his adaptation of the parable of the vineyard, he recounts how the high walls of 'very saintly laws, cédulas and commands' were placed around the vineyard of New Spain for its 'defense, aid, and protection'—and for a time they were able to keep out the 'wild animals and beasts of prey' who gathered round 'eager to seize, ravish, and destroy'. But then a 'little door' was opened through the arrival of a visitador who came to increase the Indians' tributes and 'to shout for money and more money', and the 'wild beast of unbridled avarice and the wild boar' were unleashed into the vineyard. Now these beasts have multiplied to the point where they have taken over the whole land. The walls have been torn down and the vineyard has become an open thoroughfare for 'all kinds of animals of prey'.¹¹⁵ Mendieta presents our 'here' and 'now' by drawing on one of the

¹¹⁴ Gerónimo Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica Indiana* (Mexico, D.F: Porrúa, 1993), pp. 562–63, cit. and trans. Díaz Balsera, *The Pyramid under the Cross*, p. 201. Cf. Brading, *The First America*, p. 113.

¹¹⁵ Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica Indiana* pp. 562–63, cit. and trans. Díaz Balsera, *The Pyramid under the Cross*, p. 201.

bleakest senses of 'here' and 'now' available in the Bible. 'Not only have the fruits of the Indians' Christianity and the branches of their temporal prosperity disappeared, but even the few stocks of the vine that are still left are sick, lean, worm-infested, sterile and profitless. The vineyard has turned into an uncultivated pasture'.¹¹⁶ The 'now' is the kind of biblical 'now' that is positioned in the ruins of a past utopia; a broken present that can barely conceive of a restorative time-to-come.

Mendieta describes the 'Indian' apocalypse as an *imitacion...del affligido pueblo israelítico* (an imitation, or *aemulatio*, of the suffering Israelites).¹¹⁷ The 'Indians' are inscribed in the text of Psalm 79. They are the Jerusalemites whose blood is poured out like water. 'Devoured' by their enemies, they implore God to let their groans come before him and (finally, belatedly, and probably already too late) bring the devastation to an end. Mendieta invokes biblical tropes of the almost decimated remnant in the figure of the fast-combusting vineyard with 'little left before it will be totally lost'.¹¹⁸ He calls on the inner-biblical nexus of decimation and protest; the sense that there is something excessive about the 'end' brought about, or allowed, by God. The catastrophe is ventriloquized through the often shocking language of the psalms of complaint, where God himself seems to require forgiveness for negligence or abuse and strident language is used to shock him into action, mercy or restraint.

The hispanicised and Christianised Andean Guamán Poma de Ayala (1535–c. 1616) also drew on the trope of the *deus absconditus* and the psalms of complaint. Writing in the early seventeenth century amidst the ruins of a brutal campaign to extirpate 'idolatry', he cried: 'How is it that the true lieutenant of God, the holy pope, is far away? Where are you, our lord, King Philip?'.¹¹⁹ The hybridised protest/scream fused the traditional quechua *maypim canqui* prayer 'Creator of the world, where are you?' with the structure of psalms of complaint. The words that once stood for an ancient Andean spiritual quest now became literal and

¹¹⁶ Mendieta, cit. (without reference to the original) in Hanke, *All Mankind is One*, p. 123. Hanke gives his source as John Leddy Phelan, *The Millenial Kingdom of the Franciscans of the New World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

¹¹⁷ Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica Indiana*, pp. 562–63.

¹¹⁸ Gerónimo Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica Indiana* (Mexico, D.F: Porrúa, 1993), pp. 562–63, cit. and trans. Díaz Balsera, *The Pyramid under the Cross*, p. 201.

¹¹⁹ Guaman Poma, *Nuevo corónica y buen gobierno* [*The First New Chronicle and Good Government*] [1615], critical edition by John V. Murra and Rolena Adorno; translation and analysis of Quechua by Jorge L. Urioste, (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1980) pp. 1114, 1122, 1139. See also Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 140.

accusatory: ‘Where are you God of heaven?’ It is not just that the Israelites or indigenous peoples have been reduced to a no-people. The *I am* is not. God is nowhere. ‘The world is upside-down. There is no God and there is no king; they are in Rome and Castile.’¹²⁰ The image of a Christian God who has stayed back at home in Rome is a strikingly acerbic qualification of universal Christendom and universal compassion—one articulated in the words of the Bible mixed with a quechua prayer. Unexpectedly (for those of us schooled in the Bibles of other empires) the Bible supplies the resources to accuse ‘Spain’, and to inveigh against divine absence or excess.

The Telegraph Bible, the British Empire, and a New Improved Parable of the Sower For an Industrial Age

In conclusion—and to return to the contrast with the ‘Telegraph Bible’—I want to compare Sahagún’s bleak parable of the sower and figures of a God-deserted wasteland with systems of evangelical husbandry in the nineteenth century British Empire. Our contrast comes courtesy of the Reverend Alexander Duff, the first overseas missionary and the newly appointed head of the Foreign Committee of the Church of Scotland. In 1839, two years into the reign of Queen Victoria, he published his six hundred and forty-seven page tome *India, and India Missions, including Sketches of the Gigantic System of Hinduism*. The form of the book expresses efficiency. Key sections are italicised (as the equivalent of bullet points) for speedy processing by the reader-missionary in a hurry. The relentless focus is on the best methods for promoting ‘the Christian enterprise’ and (in a far more mechanistic adaptation of the parable of the sower) ‘*plant[ing] the Gospel in the places where it can have most effect if it strikes root*’.

In a perfect expression of the age of the Liberal Bible, divine commands are now devolved to committee meetings. The committee has debated ‘*where and how we were to commence operations*’ and the minutes report that ‘The original resolution expressive of obligation to the Great Head of the Church, and of sympathy with our perishing fellow-men, recognized the world as the only legitimate and scriptural ‘field’ for the missionary enterprise.’¹²¹ But the ‘inadequacy of available resources’ led the Church to select some section of ‘the field’ for initial operations. It chose,

¹²⁰ Gauman Poma, *Nuevo corónica y buen gobierno*, p. 1139.

¹²¹ Rev. Alexander Duff, *India, and India Missions, including Sketches of the Gigantic System of Hinduism* (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1839), p. 497 (his italics); p. 479.

'for reasons potent and manifold', 'India', and those other 'Indians'. The land is then 'surveyed' (Duff's word) as if with all the resources of triangulation, the theodolite, and topographical engineering. The 'territorial extent' is at least 'forty times the size of Scotland'. The population is 'at least fifty times the aggregate of all Scotland'.¹²² An effective system can be calculated by working from land mass (surface area), the potential 'instrumentality'¹²³ (Duff's word) of the awakened (as human resources), towards the most effective distribution of salvific goods.

Life everlasting, life eternal, is remodelled for the age of 'biopolitics': politics that takes the amplification of 'life' as its primary referent. The modern era of biopolitics is one in which the gods are dead (or we work as if they are dead and will not intervene directly) and the 'biological order has no source other than the biological order.'¹²⁴ Life folds in on itself self-referentially, tautologically, as its own cause and effect. In Duff's system for propagating eternal life, eternal life becomes a question of demographics, statistics, climate, culture, education, tables, experiments, and endless trials, testing the viability of a given method. One must calculate the 'proportion of interest, and resources, and labour that should be lavished on each [strategy]—and the distinctive form which each must assume from peculiarities of climate, locality and government; as well as the social, religious, and hereditary opinions, habits and prejudices of the people'—to maximal effect.¹²⁵

A crucial factor for Duff is efficient human resource management. One cannot obtain 'the necessary supply [of missionary bodies] from home' unless 'every godly layman were suddenly metaphorsed [sic.] into a minister of salvation—and by some awful catastrophe, the whole body of the faithful were driven to flee to some Indian Pella for refuge, as were the Jews of old from the city of their fathers...'¹²⁶ And we must consider the returns on training invested in a single missionary body which is, in itself, all too rare. 'The simple statistical record shows that, after subtracting about half-a-dozen of extraordinary long lives, the average amount of

¹²² Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 479.

¹²³ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 291.

¹²⁴ Georges Canguilhem, *Ideology and Rationality in the History of the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 141. For now classic statements on biopolitics, see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

¹²⁵ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 290.

¹²⁶ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 313.

missionary life in India does not exceed six or seven years!¹²⁷ Human bodies are all too fragile. They need to be saved, somehow, from their limits. Mortality must be *taken into account*.

It is possible to transcend the limits of mortality—but not by falling back into conventional Christian promises of resurrection or eternal life. Duff's God, who has devolved his work and his command to committees, does not favour supernatural intervention. He *could* 'by an instantaneous operation, perpetuate a successive race of perfect saints.'¹²⁸ But he prefers to operate within the bounds of natural law and to keep exceptional power as *potential*, or merely technical, power.¹²⁹ God prefers 'natural propagation and succession' and the 'more tedious and less brilliant process' of labour.¹³⁰ We do not live in the age of the simple supernaturalism of the 'apostles'—though Duff cannot help but look at back at them enviously, even as he knows that in this climate, this century, under this God, their strategies would fail. The apostles did not have to 'establish Bible Societies, with their large machinery of noble patrons and presidents; directors, ordinary and extraordinary; committees, general and sectional; printing-presses, translation-libraries, and travelling agencies'.¹³¹ 'St Peter and St Paul' did not have to 'woo[] the great and the mighty and the noble to become patrons and office-bearers and members of a Jerusalem Bible Society'.¹³² Nor did they have to become 'burdened and overtaxed with the operose literary labour of translation—directing the operations of the press—submitting to the drudgery of correcting proof-sheets—preparing reports for public meetings, and proposing and seconding resolutions on the platform.'¹³³ But now, in this post-apostolic age, God 'withdraws the extraordinary, so that we might work by ordinary means' and missionaries 'go not armed with miraculous powers'.¹³⁴

We cannot fall back on super-nature. But if we are denied access to the miraculous, we can avail ourselves of its more reliable simulacra: technology and the machine. The missionary enterprise must be reconceived as a technological economy based on a 'more radical separation

¹²⁷ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 328.

¹²⁸ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 344.

¹²⁹ I am deliberately evoking older distinctions between the 'ordained' and 'absolute' power.

¹³⁰ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 344.

¹³¹ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 371.

¹³² Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 371.

¹³³ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 371.

¹³⁴ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 346.

of signifying systems from the physical movement of objects.¹³⁵ We must transcend and amplify the limits of the body: not by following the example of a Christ who could turn morsels of loaves and fish into feast for a multitude, nor by simply repeating the Platonic separation of spirit/soul from the body—but by ‘engineering’¹³⁶ (Duff’s term) the Word and using modern industrial means. Resolutely opposing what he calls the ‘inartificial notion of missions,’¹³⁷ Duff lays out an artificial model: a system of ‘missionisation’. But he prefers to describe it not in terms of cold metal (as, say, a missionary factory or production line) but in the agrarian language of the parables—maximised, amplified, cultivated and drastically improved in terms of ‘yield’. He wants a mechanistically amplified model of ‘field’, ‘fruit’ and ‘seed’ that still retains the romantic pastoral-biblical connotations of ‘fruit’ and ‘seed’ and ‘field’. ‘Random sowing’ is useless. So is the process that he names as ‘to itinerate’ or ‘itinerating’. The climate of India militates against a ‘system of effectual continuous itinerancy.’¹³⁸ In a prophetic glimpse of the managerial language that will come to dominate all modes of production (including academic production), Duff fashions a *process* by turning an adjective into a verb and noun.

In the verbal manufacture of the phrase ‘a system of effectual continuous intinerancy’, we have come rather a long way from Jesus’s vague commissioning of the disciples to ‘Go and make disciples of all nations’ (e.g. Matt 28:16). A ‘system of continuous itinerancy’ is something that can be tried, tested, and graded.¹³⁹ It fails. Manifestly unproductive, itinerating is for fanatics. It is a subjective indulgence. When ‘men, fired with holy zeal, behold such multitudes in peril of perdition, and so few to rescue’ they are tempted to ‘itinerate any where and any how.’¹⁴⁰ Duff has no admiration for the ‘gush of generous philanthropy’ which makes men ‘hurry to and fro’ in ‘the glowing desire to snatch as many brands as possible from the burning.’¹⁴¹ Such ‘noble but ineffectual effort’ will receive no other trophy than the cenotaph of their own uncelebrated obsequies’.¹⁴²

¹³⁵ Stolow, ‘Salvation by Electricity’, p. 673.

¹³⁶ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 339.

¹³⁷ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 284.

¹³⁸ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 284.

¹³⁹ On the drive to test as the modern measure of truth, see Avital Ronnell, *The Test Drive* (University of Illinois Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁰ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 315.

¹⁴¹ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 316.

¹⁴² Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 316.

Duff would certainly not have been impressed with the sixteenth century friars in Mesoamerica who ‘wandered about fairly much on their own’.¹⁴³

Duff models a ‘more excellent’ way (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:31): an upgraded parable of the sower for the age of telegraphs, tests and metrics:

In scattering handfuls of corn over the frozen crest and towering eminences of the Alps or Himalaya, a single grain might obtain a lodgement in the cleft or crevice of a naked rock; and there exposed to the concentrated rays of a summer sun, it might rear its nodding form far aloft amid a region of sublime sterility:—but what prospect would that hold out of reaping the bountiful returns of an autumnal increase?¹⁴⁴

Outpacing, it not overtly criticising, the parable of the sower (these days, the sower would be well advised to take soil samples and undertake climate studies before so liberally committing scant resources), he condemns the wastefulness of ‘casting . . . good seed at random over the earth’.¹⁴⁵ Laying out his blueprints before the board and seeking funding and approval, he gives a powerpoint presentation to the Foreign Committee:

Our design was not, like that of the witless colonist, first to erect a huge mill, at a vast expense, in an uncultivated waste, and, having done so, look around in vain for any corn to grind. Our design was to cultivate the ground first, and having secured the prospect of an abundant crop, then erect the mill to convert the grain into materials for the “staff of life”.¹⁴⁶

In the biopolitics of mission, ‘life’ is volatile. It is a target that is constantly moving. We must monitor it closely and change our strategies accordingly. Outcomes must be scrutinised for ‘practicability’ and ‘progression’ and resources reallocated accordingly. Or, in Duff’s words, ‘The practicability of different plans which tend to accelerate the progression, must vary with the parts which have already sent out the most vigorous shoots.’¹⁴⁷ Just as there is no yield from zealous ‘itineration’, so it is wasteful to ‘empty the depositories and disperse bales of the written word, wholesale, over the land—raising the shout ‘All India is now supplied!’¹⁴⁸ This only leads to the ironic desecration of the Bible that will become the punchline of Homi Bhabha’s ‘Signs Taken for Wonders’. ‘Instead of being converted

¹⁴³ John Townsend, ‘Missionary Journeys in Acts and European Missionary Societies’, *Anglican Theological Review* 68 (1986) pp. 99–104 (104).

¹⁴⁴ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 314.

¹⁴⁵ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 284.

¹⁴⁶ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 511.

¹⁴⁷ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 290.

¹⁴⁸ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 377.

into stores for the intellect', Bibles are 'turned into so much waste paper for petty retailers at the bazaar'.¹⁴⁹

In his own reduction of the Bible to raw material—so many bales of Bible to be produced and distributed—Duff proposes a more profitable translation economy in the manner of John Stuart Mill or Adam Smith:

Prepare translations before the set time, and they may moulder in depositories, or be scattered like grain to decay on Alpine rocks, or be choked like seed in an Indian jungle. Prepare them against the set time when newly implanted disposition and preparatory trains of sentiment, a full or partial reception of proclaimed truths, and a familiarity with adapted terms have paved the way, cleared the wilderness, prepared a soil,—and the circulation may be blessed like Luther's German version.¹⁵⁰

Efficient Bible horticulture is aided by what Duff calls his 'downward filter' theory or system. The equality of all believers notwithstanding 'one Knox is worth ten thousand illiterate peasants'.¹⁵¹ Educating 'Hindu' elites and gently inculcating Christianity as part of a broader curriculum is the way to 'maximise' the material of the 'staff of life'.

There are some similarities, here, with the early Spanish empire. Spanish missionaries (the term 'missionary', like 'Spain', is anachronistic), also targeted the elite, just like their contemporaries in Europe. Sahagún founded a school, the *Colegia Imperial de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco*, where the Franciscans educated many of the cultural go-betweens who made the *General History* possible. In contrast to Duff's strategies of missionisation by system and committee, these friars did 'itinerate'. Though Philip II attempted some kind of survey, or census, of the indigenous populations, the friars only discussed or monitored 'numbers' as grandiose eschatological expectations, fuelled by Joachimite expectations of the end times, or in arguments between the Dominicans and the Franciscans over whether one should baptise *en masse*. Though some noted the limits, and even weakness, of 'revelation',¹⁵² the friars did expect, and report, miracles and apparitions of the virgin, just as their military counterparts used the war

¹⁴⁹ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 528.

¹⁵⁰ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, pp. 385–86.

¹⁵¹ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 307.

¹⁵² For example, the Jesuit José de Acosta tends towards the most 'natural' explanations of the New World. Hypothesising how people reached the Indies (and in the process theorising a land link between the continents at the North Pole, at the point of the Bering Straits, which wouldn't be discovered until 1728) he reasons 'since there is no testimony for me to follow I shall have to proceed by the thread of reason, though it be very thin, until it disappears from before my eyes' (Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, p. 51).

cry 'Santiago' to call Saint James to their aid. In early bursts of eschatological dreaming, Mendieta rhapsodized about two thousand Indians following the friars through the hills and barren lands for confession (with women giving birth to babies on the road, and very old people dragging themselves along). and reported how two friars baptized more than fifteen thousand adults and children in one day, after which they were so exhausted that they could no longer raise their arms.¹⁵³ But Mendieta was also responsible for the bleak transposition of the parable of the vineyard. Eschatological fantasies were haunted by a dark side, into which they collapsed.

Of course I do not mean to claim that the British Empire—and its missionaries—did not experience trauma, failure, loss of words or the loss of the Word. (Nor do I imagine that each individual mind and pen was held and shaped by some over-riding epoch in any simple sense.) *The Telegraph to India: Suggestions to the Senders of Messages* (1870) advises the sender to 'select the route which happens to be working best at the moment', warning that 'lines of such length as those which connect this country to the East are necessarily subject to continual variation in their working'.¹⁵⁴ It is written to aid efficient communication on the premise that communication can fail. And there is no denying that a 'hollowness... sounds through the English imperialist mind in a thousand forms, in Rider Haggard's necrophilia, in Kipling's moments of gloomy doubt, ... in the gloomy cosmic truth of Forster's Marabar caves'.¹⁵⁵ Even the Reverend Duff feels daunted: 'So utterly disproportionate is the number of labourers to the extent of the field to be cultivated', he laments, 'that the very thought were enough to plunge the weak in faith into despair'.¹⁵⁶ And yet, the expressions of doubt and hollowness are very different—as is the sense of failure, the cadences of lament, and the very understanding of 'the end'. Suggesting that it may be the permanent condition of Christianity (particularly Christianity seeking funding) to be in perpetual crisis, Duff sardonically celebrates the fact that though the Church is 'long sunk into dotage and senility' it has 'not become utterly dead'.¹⁵⁷ But this sense of being on the brink of an end is very different to Sahagún's intense and

¹⁵³ Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica Indiana*, p. 266 cit. Díaz Balsera, *Pyramid under the Cross*, p. 181.

¹⁵⁴ *The Telegraph to India: Suggestions to the Senders of Messages*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1981), p. 265.

¹⁵⁶ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 310.

¹⁵⁷ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 414.

acute sense of living in the midst of an all-consuming end. Duff's end is the kind of 'end' that serves as exhortation. It has a *solution*, in more investment and the better maximisation of resources. Sahagún lives in the ruins of an 'end' of truly biblical proportions. Improved policy cannot save us from this type of 'end'.

Whereas Sahagún records the catastrophic loss of Indian bodies, Duff writes of the loss of Indian raw material in the sense of Indian labour. He urges British business men to consider the 'thousands that are thus periodically lost and consumed by the constant recurrence of the Durga Pujah, and other heathen festivals'.¹⁵⁸ He exhorts the merchants to throw the thousands 'annually lost to you through the continuance of heathenism, into the Christian treasury; for the express purpose of expelling that very heathenism, the continued reign of which constitutes your loss'.¹⁵⁹ Through divine resource management and heavenly economics, 'those thousands' will be 'restored to you, or to your children, in kind, a hundred, yea, a thousandfold'. They will be 'restored to you with an ample revenue at once of glory and of profit'.¹⁶⁰ Christianity is firmly allied with commerce. In the in-built serendipity of economy, one can be sure that the 'most rapid advancement of your own temporal prosperity' is 'coincident with the promotion of the eternal well-being of your fellow-men'.¹⁶¹

The same principles that apply to the micro-economy of a single family preside over the wealth of nations:

And has not the historic law, by which prosperity has been found coincident with the exclusive possession of the resources of India, been eminently verified and realized in the case of Britain? . . . if, weighed in the balance on that day, we shall have been found wanting in our national management of so sublime a trust, what can we expect from the analogy of the past, but to see the sun of Britain set,—to rise no more forever?¹⁶²

God is watching our management of divine resources. The same 'overruling Providence' who 'commissioned' the Roman legions to 'break down the barriers to intercommunion between the states, and nations, and kingdoms of Antiquity' to 'prepare the way for the ambassadors of the

¹⁵⁸ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 226.

¹⁵⁹ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 226.

¹⁶⁰ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 226.

¹⁶¹ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 226.

¹⁶² Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 15.

Cross'¹⁶³ have placed us in the true *hegemon*—sustained and supported with all the attendant resources of technology and trade:

Britain, the most central kingdom of the habitable world—inasmuch as of all existing capitals, its metropolis is that which would form the centre of the largest hemisphere tenanted by man—Britain, the most highly favoured with the light and life of Revelation,—Britain, the most signally privileged with the ability, and the will, and the varied facilities for dispensing blessings among the nations...

It has given 'her' command of that 'queen', or centre of the peripheries:

India, that occupies the same commanding position in relation to the densely peopled regions of southern and eastern Asia that Palestine does to the Old World; and Britain, to both Old and New?—India, which—itsself containing a fifth of the world's inhabitants,—when once thrown open, may thus become a door of access to two-fifths more[]—India, which, when once lighted up by the lamp of salvation, may become a spiritual Pharos, to illumine more than half the population of the globe...¹⁶⁴

For Duff, the Bible is a symbolic hegemon, equated with the centralised good(s) of Britain at the centre of the world. He refers to the Bible as a 'Book of Life'; an 'unerring chart'; an 'infallible directory'; an 'authoritative record'; and a '*common written standard*'.¹⁶⁵ 'Chart', 'directory', 'record' and 'standard' are descriptions of a Bible for the age of biopolitics and metrics. The Bible converts itself into a table, like a timetable. It turns itself into map; an inventory; a 'mean', as in 'Greenwich Mean Time'. The phrase 'common written standard' evokes the co-ordination of time associated with the establishment of railways, inaugurating the 'world-wide time of managers'.¹⁶⁶ It also prophesies, almost to the letter, Armand Mattelart's condensed little definition of communication networks, where 'communicating means standardising and doing away with chance'.¹⁶⁷ By turning itself from a sprawling, heterogeneous text into a chart, a standard, a directory and a record, the Bible gets its story together and effectively turns itself into a tight little telegraph message. It streamlines itself for quick delivery, in line with a policy of missionisation that looks for 'the speediest and most satisfactory result'.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Duff, *India, and India Missions*, p. 33.

¹⁶⁴ Duff, *India and India Missions*, p. 26.

¹⁶⁵ Duff, *India and India Missions*, p. 41, p. 493.

¹⁶⁶ Mattelart, *Networking the World*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁷ Mattelart, *Networking the World*, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ Duff, *India and India Missions*, p. 41.

Were an alien (say, an 'Indian') suddenly dropped into Britain (and here Duff seems to imagine a scenario like the opening paragraphs of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*), to try and ascertain the content of Christianity by speaking with Christians, he would, Duff confesses, be 'utterly puzzled and bewildered' by 'interminable contrariety: a 'hundred schools of theology; a thousand sects; ten thousand varying opinions'. The Word, in contrast, stands forth as a 'central stream of orthodoxy'.¹⁶⁹ (The written word improves on the inefficiencies and discrepancies of 'oral communication'. The force of writing—already able to transcend locality and mortality, at least by reputation—will be amplified by much more sophisticated data networks that make transmission speedier and more precise.) Already the Word is functioning in this fashion. Once the visiting 'Indian' masters the Word, he will automatically be able to separate the main message from the oral babble. He will know how to identify the 'numberless rills drawn off from the main current' of the Bible. He will be able to understand the 'points of divergence' and 'the interposing obstacles that force [some 'Christians'] to pursue devious courses' without ever being distracted from what '*Christianity really is*...'.¹⁷⁰ But the problem is not just outside the Bible, but inside, as Duff admits, because he has the institutional resources to deal with what he admits. Inside the Bible, we also have a confusion of sources, as a nineteenth century clergyman is well aware. The multiplicity of the Bible is such that we need to distinguish between the mainstream and the subsidiary streams. Though the 'Bible that contains them is wrapt up in ancient dead languages', the 'great leading doctrines' are 'potent and clear'.¹⁷¹

Duff can rely on passing the complexities and the dead languages over to the professional machine of biblical scholarship, which is now firmly established. Biblical criticism is a cultural filtration system. It takes the difficulty as grist to its mill, and allows the public Bible to be on message, loud and clear. Symptomatically, this dedicated Presbyterian sometimes references the 'standard' or 'chart' of Bible, but barely cites the Bible in any detail in the whole of this massive 684-page tome. Christ is referred to as a *personality*: an emblem of perfection. The only reference to the gospels is the parable of the sower—new and improved, in ways that make the biblical original seem rather distant and quaint. Otherwise the only texts

¹⁶⁹ Duff, *India and India Missions*, p. 388.

¹⁷⁰ Duff, *India and India Missions*, p. 388.

¹⁷¹ Duff, *India and India Missions*, p. 388.

referred to in any detail are the early missionary strategies of Paul and the apostles (often invoked as contrast); Isaiah's anti-idol polemic; and damning descriptions of foreign religions. The Telegraph Bible, it seems, is a binary code—like the dot-dash system of Morse Code. It is allowed to speak when it can clarify cultures by creating clear binaries. Thus 'Hindu' 'Juger-nath' is named the 'Moloch of the East', and his bloodthirsty waste of human bodies is contrasted with the compassion and beauty of Christ.

The Bible does not need to speak because its message is so clear. Unlike the Bible of the sixteenth century Spanish empire, it does not sprawl into administration, anthropology, law, and politics. It is enclosed in 'religion'. It is the specialist text, and object, of Christianity and mission. And even here it is barely referenced. And because of this, its centrality and universality is more assured. *The Bible can really be the centre of the world when the consequences of this do not impinge on law, Realpolitik, and the question of local jurisdiction. Only when the Bible is reduced to a token, can it truly become symbolic hegemon: the (vague) centre of the world.* The Bible is reduced to a few instantly recognisable signs and motions: a basic communicative code. This is what guarantees its new quasi-divine universality and super-nature: its 'reproducibility and extension through virtual space'.¹⁷² The God of the telegraph, and the Telegraph Bible, is a God who regulates; a God opposed to nominalism, arbitrariness, contingency, itinerancy, aimless wandering, and chance. His Bible is a something like a strategy, a template, a metric table, an electric pulse, a dot-dash code, the manipulation of a telegraph lever arm, a standard, a chart. Not only can such a Word be transmitted without error, but it becomes superfluous as Word/words. 'Bible' can circulate like electricity; a supra-territorial form of global connection. Autotelic, it flows—not so much to produce complex 'meaning', but to transmit basic forms and signals like an electric pulse.

¹⁷² Stolow, 'Salvation by Electricity', p. 669.

THE *ESPERANÇA DE ISRAEL*: A MISSION TO CROMWELL

Maria Ana T. Valdez

Historical Background

Research conducted in recent years has strongly suggested that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries represented a new wave of millenarian thought and eschatological expectation within the Iberian world.¹ Given events such as the Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492 and the Iberian Union (1580–1640), it is easy to understand why such eschatological hope was flourishing and was stronger than ever in the Iberian world. On the one hand, it is necessary in order to account for the strength of both Iberian Inquisitions—Spanish and Portuguese—and how the persecution of New Christians for their supposedly Judaizing practices is normally associated with the ‘Black Legend of the Inquisition’. At the same time, and particularly when it comes to Portugal, one should remember how people were dealing with the consequences of sixty years of Spanish dominion (1580–1640), and subsequent challenges in the aftermath of the Portuguese independence.

To achieve a more thorough view of the Iberian environment, particularly Portugal, further analysis of Jewish belief in the imminent coming of the Messiah is required. Only then may a historian understand how eschatological hope was essential for these two nations—the Sephardic Jews and the Portuguese—as it represented the anticipation of a better future and the end-times thought to be immediately at hand.² Such expectation

¹ Maria Ana T. Valdez, ‘Revival of Biblical Motifs in the Early Modern Period: The Iberian Eschatological Hope in the 16th and 17th Centuries’, in *From Antiquity to the Present: The 2008 European Association of Biblical Studies Lisbon Meeting* (ed. Ph. R. Davies, J. A. Ramos and M. A. Valdez; Porto: Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa, 2009), pp. 81–94.

² The concept of *nation* used in this paper is the one utilized by Miriam Bodian to describe the settlement and development of Sephardic communities in Amsterdam of Portuguese and Spanish origin. See Miriam Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

The idea of an imminent eschatological end was so pressing that it originated movements as the one led by Sabbatai Zvi, among others. See David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603–1655* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

regarding the end of time represents a phenomenon traversing all boundaries within the Portuguese world. Examples and expressions of such expectations may be found not only among different religious groups, but also among different social strata. From the well-educated man to the cobbler, from the Jesuit to the Sephardim, many believed that the end of time was at hand and that either Christ, for the former, or the Messiah, for the latter, was about to come.³

*Amsterdam: Menasseh ben Israel, António de Montezinos,
and the Portuguese Nation*

When António de Montezinos arrived in Amsterdam in 1644 and reported how he had found the 'Lost Tribes' of Israel in South America (in 1642), many thought that the end of time was finally at hand.⁴ 'Montezinos' report', as it was generally known, became influential for Sephardic Jews and Christians by further emphasizing eschatological hope in the midst of Catholics, and English millenarians.

According to the tradition of the 'Lost Tribes', ten tribes disappeared following the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Those so-called 'Lost Tribes' were scattered all over the world and their identity lost. In due time, however, they were supposed to be revealed, thereby allowing for the final reunion of the Israelites before the end of this world and the Last Judgment could take place. The motif of a close reunion of the 'Ten Tribes' was, at the time, a recurrent and influential subject within Jewish messianic groups, as described by Gershom Sholem.⁵ Hence one can understand the importance given to the stories told by Montezinos, as his account represented *per se* a sign of the End. Moreover, this context makes the subsequent agitation and questioning arising among both

³ Examples of this Portuguese eschatological hope can be found in the works of Gonçalo Annes de Bandarra, Fr. Sebastião de Paiva, Isaac ben Abravanel, Fr. António Vieira, etc.

⁴ António de Montezinos, also known as Aaron Levi, was a New Christian, born around 1604 in Portugal. He was the descendant of Jews who converted in 1497. He left his hometown of Vilaflor and travelled to the West Indies, where he lived until 1644. Then he moved to Amsterdam, where he stayed for approximately six months. Following this, he returned to Brazil, probably living either in Pernambuco or in Recife, two cities historically known for their Jewish communities. He died in Brazil in the summer of either 1647 or 1648. Montezinos' report can be found in the initial chapter of the different editions of *Esperança de Israel/Spes Israelis* by Menasseh ben Israel.

⁵ *Apud* Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676* (Bollingen Series 93; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

Jews and Christians understandable. Jewish belief in the imminence of the Messiah and Christian belief in the imminence of the second coming of Christ were both enhanced by this report, creating the perfect environment for the spread of the rumor that the End of time was at hand.⁶

Menasseh ben Israel's book(s)—*Esperança de Israel*/*Spes Israelis*—represents, at least in part, his reaction to the many questions concerning the content of Montezinos' report, as put to him by John Dury and others among his millenarian friends.⁷ The content of *Esperança de Israel*, however, can only be fully understood when framed by the broader messianic hopes of the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, of which ben Israel was at the time the spiritual leader. Consequently, to analyze his work it is necessary to emphasize how the two editions—the Spanish and the Latin (with the English text translated from the latter)—targeted two different audiences, with diverging eschatological goals and educational background.⁸

These two editions were published at the same time, in Amsterdam, by ben Israel, in his own printing house; the English translation, by Moses Wall, was published almost immediately afterwards in London. This suggests that people were eager to listen to ben Israel's opinion on Montezinos' claim regarding the 'Lost Tribes'. Amsterdam appears to have been the perfect place to publicly discuss Jewish messianic expectation, now in the novel format of a printed book, an approach not previously seen in the Iberian Peninsula.⁹

The first audience—the Sephardic community for whom the Spanish edition was written—should be identified with traditional Sephardim listeners who believed in the imminent coming of the Messiah, while the second—the broader Christian audience of the Latin/English version—was waiting for the second coming of Christ. In order to understand the content of these two books it is necessary to remember the particularities

⁶ For further description of Amsterdam's environment, see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation* and Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard H. Popkin (eds.), *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 15; Leiden: Brill, 1989).

⁷ Menasseh ben Israel, *מקוה ישראל*, *Esto es, Esperança de Israel* (Amsterdam: Semuel Ben Israel Soeiro, 1650); Menasseh ben Israel, *Spes Israelis* (Amstelodami: [s.n.], 1650).

It is important to remember J. Dury's close relationship with the so-called 'Fifth Monarchy Men' group. For further information, see B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber, 1972).

⁸ Menasseh ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel* (trans. M. Wall; London: Hannah Allen, 1650).

⁹ The establishment of the Sephardim in Amsterdam allowed the community to begin printing their own books. This represents a turning point in the Sephardic history.

of each group's expectations and how these may have impacted and/or influenced particular interpretations of the events at the time.

Regarding the history of *Esperança de Israel* it is appropriate to open a parenthesis of sorts here, and to consider whether one should speak of two 'editions' or of two books with similar titles and which were written by the same author. It is my opinion that the latter is probably a more suitable option, although historiography has not yet considered this option thoroughly, and engaging this question completely would fall well beyond the goal of this essay. Nevertheless, this idea requires some consideration before we analyze ben Israel's argumentation in these two books, although it represents *per se* a question to be addressed in a future paper. For this paper's argument it is enough to bear in mind that the bilingual edition of the book was ben Israel's choice of means for answering questions posed by Jews and Christians, and that the content and structure of the two books do not match in the way one would expect of a translation. Ben Israel, instead of replying with (yet another) letter to Dury or by commenting on remarks made by some of his fellow Jews, chose to write a book, thereby securing a broader audience. Another detail that should not be ignored concerns the fact that Menasseh printed a book with a wide circulation, and in which he addressed several issues that potentially endangered the situation of the Jewish community of Amsterdam.¹⁰

Ben Israel was one of the most important Jewish thinkers in the Amsterdam of his time. He was one of the most famous rabbis of the city whose name and reputation survived for centuries to follow.¹¹ Additionally, he was surely a man of his time: one cannot forget how he held conversations with figures such as the Portuguese Jesuit António Vieira on theological issues.¹² Ben Israel was surely aware that his opinions had not only to be finely tuned but also framed by a diplomatic tone: he could not aggravate other members of his own nation, but it was also necessary to avoid aggravating the leaders of the Dutch Republic in order to secure their continued support of the 'nation'. This need to please may well apply also to

¹⁰ At the time, Amsterdam was sought as a place where people with different religious beliefs could live together. Those not abiding by the official religion of the city could neither publicly discuss it nor refer to it as inferior to their own religion. For an assessment of the problems of coexistence in Amsterdam, see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*.

¹¹ Kaplan, Méchoulán and Popkin (eds.), *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World*.

¹² For further notes on this specific issue, see Antonio José Saraiva, 'António Vieira, Menasseh ben Israel et le Cinquième Empire', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 6 (1972), pp. 25–57.

the English Protestants, as it was important to officially re-open England to Jews for several reasons (security, commerce, etc.).¹³

The political environment of the time in which the book was written explains, in part, why ben Israel assumed this position of non-conflict with regard to other religious groups.¹⁴ Notwithstanding this, he was publicly engaging in an ongoing Jewish discussion concerning the coming of the Messiah, a discussion that—until that moment—had not yet taken place in a public fashion, never mind in printed form. How should historians explain this change? Was this merely a decision by ben Israel, or does it represent a broader change in Jewish attitude? The fact that ben Israel wrote in Amsterdam, a place considered by the majority of scholars to be well-advanced concerning questions of religious tolerance, has to be taken into consideration while studying such phenomena. On the other hand, we should also bear in mind the scope and context of the ‘Portuguese Nation’ of Amsterdam, which can provide further insight into the matter.

As already mentioned, the two editions of the *Esperança de Israel* published in 1650 raise several questions. Furthermore, no scholar has yet undertaken the complex and tedious task of carefully comparing the Spanish and the Latin editions word by word, and this should not be forgotten. Such a task would go beyond the confines of this article but, nevertheless, there are some questions that require further consideration before we can begin to understand why this work was so well received in its English translation, by the English Philo-Semites and why Cromwell himself was so welcoming of ben Israel’s petition.

Ben Israel’s books were printed in Amsterdam in 1650. A translation by Moses Wall of the Latin version into English followed immediately and was printed in London by Livewell Chapman. These multiple editions may be explained by the fact that some of the questions addressed by ben Israel were of importance to several different groups of seventeenth-century European society. At the same time, historians should ask further questions concerning his reasons for pursuing these publications, particularly regarding what he personally hoped to achieve. That said, the

¹³ Although Jews had officially been expelled from England following an edict in 1290, the fact is that there are multiple accounts of continued Jewish presence in England. They were among the most important traders in London in the seventeenth century, and this was no small part of the necessity to establish the lawfulness of their presence in England. For further information, see Katz, *Philo-Semitism*.

¹⁴ Menasseh ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel* (trans. M. Wall; ed. H. Méchoulán and G. Nahon; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 94. Unless otherwise noted, all references of the English version of the *Hope of Israel* will be to this edition.

majority of the questions treated in the book had a universal character, in the sense that they appealed to both religious groups and that ben Israel did not write in a way dismissive of Christian eschatological hope regarding the second coming of Christ (thus enhancing his appeal).

Esperança de Israel contains two distinct parts: the first contains António de Montezinos' story about how he found the 'Lost Tribes', while the second is ben Israel's description and analysis of the work of previous authors on the subject of the 'Lost Tribes' along with his own opinion on the content of Montezinos' report, particularly when it concerns the Jewish origin of the American Indians.

Esperança de Israel is the first publication where the so-called 'Montezinos' Report' of 1642 is reproduced. This is in fact remarkable: although its content was well known before this, there is no previous printed version. Furthermore, when recalling the importance of messianic hope for Sephardim and Christians, one is compelled to ask why no one else published the report before—especially since many people quoted and discussed its contents. Could this be explained through the potential for religious persecution? We may only speculate, although we do know that several other important men were familiar with the content of Montezinos' report and had discussed it at length—if not in writing, at least in public discussions on the topic. Among those who appear to be aware of the story we should number Isaac de la Peyrère and António Vieira as well as John Dury, Samuel Hartlib and Thomas Thorowgood.¹⁵

Several noticeable differences between the two works by ben Israel are important to note. The first concerns the structure of the book(s): while the Spanish is organized into 72 sections, the English only has only 41.¹⁶ Furthermore, it is very difficult to match precisely the content of the former with the latter, as some sections were either omitted or further developed. The second major set of differences is found in the content of the book, which represents the most important variances.

The first noticeable discrepancy regards the dedication, which differs in the Spanish and English editions.¹⁷ In the Spanish one reads: 'A los Muy Nobles, Prudentes, y Magnificos Señores, Deputados y Parnassim deste

¹⁵ Saraiva, 'António Vieira, Menasseh ben Israel et le Cinquième Empire'.

¹⁶ The numbers of the sections are shown here as they appear in the original editions to demonstrate that there is also a stylistic difference to account for.

¹⁷ Given the complexity behind the differences between the Spanish and the Latin, from this point onwards we will be using mostly the Spanish and the English editions as the primary texts for comparison. The English translation will be used as it reflects almost entirely the content of the Latin edition upon which it was based.

K.K. de Talmud Tora'.¹⁸ In the Latin and in the English translations one reads: 'To the parliament, to the supreme court of England, and to the right honourable the council of state, Menasseh ben Israel, prays God to give health, and all happinesse'.¹⁹ Thus the Spanish is dedicated to the high members of the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, to whom ben Israel says he was trying to assess the truth behind Montezinos' story while answering to the questions raised by some very important Englishmen, whereas the Latin/English was already dedicated to the English Parliament (a mission on which he would only formally engage himself five years later). Suffice it to say that the two dedications allow us to suggest that ben Israel was addressing two very different groups from the moment the books were published. Given such differences in the dedications, it is no surprise that the content of the two versions also differs considerably. Henceforth one should question whether ben Israel was intentionally writing two books under the same title, with two objectives in mind, or if such variation was solely the result of the work of the translator.

Another difference is that only in the Spanish edition is there a list of 'authors and Hebrew books used in the book'. There is no such reference in the English edition (nor in the Latin), although both works compile a list of 'The authors of other nations, which are quoted in this treatise'.²⁰ Is Menasseh already in 1650 playing the role of the politician or the diplomat that he will assume during his later mission to Cromwell, in 1655?²¹ If a list containing the names of Jewish *auctoritates* had been printed in the English version, ben Israel's later diplomatic actions would have been jeopardized, as he might have been understood to be underlining Jewish importance, to the detriment of Christians and, in particular, the English. It is our opinion that the omission of this list in the English translation can only be explained by one of two options: either ben Israel was proving how skilled he was in the diplomatic game and decided not to use the Jewish references as it could alarm some of his English correspondents, or the translator—Moses Wall—simply decided not to include such a section as he knew that it could cause controversy among the English readers.

¹⁸ 'To the very noble, prudent, and magnificent lords, deputies and parnassim of this K.K. of the Talmud Torah'. 'Parnassim' is an early modern term used to refer to the chairmen of the Sephardic community in Amsterdam.

¹⁹ In the Latin edition the text is similar as it reads: 'Supremo Angliae Consessus Parlamento, ejusdemque Reipublicae Status Consilio Honorando, Salutem, ac felicitatem omnem, a Deo apprecatur'.

²⁰ Ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*.

²¹ Ben Israel, *Spes Israelis*.

The latter seems an odd option, given that it was a translation of the Latin text, where the list does not appear either, and ben Israel's contemporaries refer his extreme care regarding the quality of his printings and books. Besides, there is no reason to think that Wall was working on his own and that his work was not supervised.

In the introduction to their edition of the *Hope of Israel*, G. Nahom and H. Méchoulan state that some of the 'mistakes' found in the English edition could be 'evidence of the existence of a non-Jewish translator who had Menasseh ben Israel's full confidence in a way which was sometimes prejudicial to the text, particularly regarding to theological matters'.²² This could be true, but again it raises the impossible question of whether the translator had been granted full liberty to work on ben Israel's text or not. It is our opinion that this simply is not probable, given ben Israel's reputation of care for the quality of his printings. This in turn leads to questions regarding whether or not these are mistakes, whether or not Menasseh was aware of the differences and even if he could possibly be behind their creation. If ben Israel was aware of all the existing differences, then the way in which the *Hope of Israel* is read needs to be re-evaluated. Moreover, it is necessary to consider the English (and thus the Latin) version a book of diplomatic character that demonstrates ben Israel's non-conflict position toward English Protestants and Christians more generally. This is, however, a question that will require further discussion in the future, given its complexity and the fact that it appears that ben Israel might have not been as candid as he may first appear.

The 'Lost Tribes' and Montezinos' Report

Esperança de Israel was written in record time during the fall of 1649, while ben Israel was still working on another of his main works, the *Conciliator*.²³ Writing this book in such a short span of time should be regarded as an indicator of how urgent it was for ben Israel to answer the questions raised by Montezinos' story. As mentioned earlier, the idea that the 'Lost Tribes' had finally been found was by itself a divine sign that the end of

²² Ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*, 62–63.

²³ Menasseh ben Israel, *Conciliator, sive, De convenientia locorum S. Scripturae, quae pugnare inter se videntur Esto es, Conciliador, o, De la conveniencia de los lugares de la S. Escritura, que repugnant entre si parecen* (Francofurti: Menasseh ben Israel, 1632). In this book, ben Israel explores how different religions had common things among them that should be used in a sense that nowadays could be described as 'universalistic'.

time was at hand. Some Jews were certain of this, as movements such as the one led by Zabbati Zvi indicate. Additionally, for some, the possibility that the 'Lost Tribes' might have been found represented not just the opportunity to believe in a close liberation of the Jews from their current torments but also the possibility that the oppression of the Portuguese and Spanish Inquisitions should be understood as part of the Danielic last tribulation. If that was the case, it would also be possible to believe in a true end to the diaspora and the beginning of a new, divinely-promised time for the Jews.

While answering these urgent questions concerning the discovery of the 'Lost Tribes', it appears that ben Israel felt the need to argue that Montezinos' story was part of an original Jewish tradition and therefore should not be appropriated by any other religious group. This question regarding the eventual appropriation of Jewish religious traditions is even more important when framed by yet another contemporary question: the Jewish origins of the American Indians discussed by English Puritans. Likewise, it is important to remember how Portuguese New Christians constituted the Sephardic community gathering at the time in Amsterdam. That is, within the community there were Jews who had professed Catholicism and knew very little about Jewish rituals (and even less about Hebrew), side-by-side with a minority, still familiar with Jewish mores. The newcomers were as eager to learn about their original culture and religion as the local community was to teach them the basics of Judaism.²⁴

Consequently, and given its wider importance, Montezinos' claims required an urgent answer from the authorities of the community; this is where ben Israel's work plays a vital role. Furthermore, one should not forget how important it was to exercise control over some of the community's new members, making sure to not indispose the Dutch authorities while continuing to benefit from their protection.

The English Puritans and the Re-admission of Jews in England

At the same time Montezinos was claiming to have found the 'Lost Tribes' of Israel in South America, English millenarians were discussing the Jewish ancestry of the American Indians. Such an issue represented a very important question for Jews, requiring ben Israel to address it thoroughly

²⁴ For further description of the new Sephardic community of Amsterdam of Portuguese origin, see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*.

as to leave no further doubt regarding his position and, by extension, the position of the entire Sephardic community of Amsterdam. On one hand, he clearly dismisses any theory referring the Native American's ancestry.

Assuming that the Tribes had been wandering all over the world, it would have been natural if ben Israel had accepted that some of its members might have found refuge on the American continent. However, there is no passage in this work where he clearly expresses such a belief. In the Spanish and the Latin books the issue is addressed in different ways, although somewhat similar. They differ specifically insofar as they contain differing attitudes toward the Spanish: in the Spanish version ben Israel writes that the 'Spanish clearly make a mistake', whereas the Latin and the English read, 'I like in part the opinion of the Spaniards'.²⁵ They are, however, similar insofar as ben Israel attempts to be as diplomatic as possible when approaching the issue. Thus, although the Spanish paragraph where this issue is addressed begins with a blatant affirmation, it soon takes a 'diplomatic' tone and opens the doors to what appears to be a more flexible opinion.²⁶ In the Spanish book we have:

Refutadas pues las precedentes opiniones es de saber, que los Españoles que habitan en dichas Indias, sienten generalmente que los Indios proceden de los 10 tribos, pero erran manifestamente: por q'aun que estos a mi ver, fueron los primeros pobladores, despues, a caso como sucedio a los Españoles, vinieron nuevas gentes dela India oriental, donde es fácil la navegaciõ a la tierra de nueva España (...)²⁷

As a result, after comparing the two versions it is possible to think that ben Israel believed that the Spaniards were not correct when asserting that American Indians were of Jewish origin, although it was correct to assume that some members of the 'Lost Tribes' were among the first colonizers of the American lands. This could easily be explained by circumstances linked with war: as often happens in this type of colonization, members of the ten tribes who arrived in America may have been defeated by newcomers and forced to retire to a hidden and secluded space—which could be the one described by Montezinos.

²⁵ Ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*, 115.

²⁶ We are therefore, questioning Nahon and Méchoulán's opinion on this subject. According to these scholars there is a translation mistake, while for us the affirmation has to be read within the context of the full paragraph. See *ibid.*

²⁷ Ben Israel, *בְּקוֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל*, *Esto es, Esperança de Israel*, 23.

On the other hand, in the Latin edition and in its English translation the author seems to have been less straightforward than in the Spanish text when writing about this subject. They read:

I like, in part, the opinion of the Spaniards who dwell in the Indies, who by common consent affirm that the Indians come of the Ten Tribes. And truly, they are not altogether mistaken because, in my opinion, they were the first planters of the Indies, as also other people of the Eastern Indies came by that straight.²⁸

Previous research has shown that one of ben Israel's goals when writing these books was to deny any possibility of Jewish ancestry of the American Indians, a goal he achieved in both books.²⁹ Ben Israel underlined two things in particular in his work: first; that Montezinos' report was a piece of good news concerning Jewish eschatological expectations and therefore did not concern any sort of Christian eschatological hope and, second, that Dury and Thorowgood were mistaken when maintaining the Jewish origin of the American Indians.³⁰ Nevertheless, one cannot disregard the fact that ben Israel never completely dismissed the hypothesis that some members of these ten tribes could have arrived earlier upon the American continent but were forced to hide. If that happened, then some of the Indians could in fact share some Jewish blood even if tradition did not allow for intermarriages. The example given by ben Israel to describe how scattered the tribes were—the one linked to Matteo Ricci—is particularly interesting to illustrate where the tribes might be found, as it refers to the existence of Jews as far away as Japan.³¹ Nonetheless, one should be aware that by denying the English claims regarding the origin of the Indians Menasseh was discreetly affirming that the American Indians were not part of God's chosen nation. To ben Israel, the sole chosen nation was the Jewish one.

Menasseh's Mission to Cromwell

While the finding of members of the 'Lost Tribes' was an important subject for Sephardic Jews, it was also a pending issue for Christians concerned

²⁸ Ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*, 115.

²⁹ For further details on the writing of this book, see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*; ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*.

³⁰ Ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*, 66.

³¹ Ben Israel, מְקוֹה יִשְׂרָאֵל, *Esto es, Esperança de Israel*, 42 and ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel*.

with the time of the Second Coming of Christ; that is, when the Final Judgment would take place and all the people of God—belonging either to the old or the new covenants—would be judged and allowed or not allowed to dwell in the newly-established, divine kingdom of God on earth. In fact, the identity of God's chosen nation—already under discussion in the Portuguese empire as a result of issues relating to Portuguese independence in 1640—had become even more important in the broader context of post-Reformation Christianity. If we also recall Dury's attempts to bring together Protestants—especially Lutherans and Calvinists—it is possible to begin assessing the importance played by this type of eschatological hope in seventeenth-century England and, in particular, to consider why the opinion of a man like ben Israel was important and of interest to so many.³² Eschatological hope and related questions were apparently an important part of seventeenth-century European thought, both on a personal as well as a more general level. Indeed, this may explain the urgent tone of many letters and pamphlets and books written on the subject at the time, as well as in reports of discussions undertaken among important men of culture from different religious viewpoints. Moreover, it also suggests that, far from disappearing, eschatological hope held a key role in the seventeenth-century relationship between Iberia and England.

For sake of clarity, it is necessary to state that, although we are analyzing the importance of Jewish and Christian eschatological hope in the development of events related to public knowledge of Montezinos' report, there were different kinds of eschatological expectations at stake depending on the particular audience: Jews, Catholics, or English Protestants. It is therefore important to underline that, although ben Israel used *Esperança de Israel* in his later mission to Cromwell (to plead for the readmission of the Jews to England), this does not mean that when the book was written in 1649–50 he was already considering a future diplomatic mission to England. Additionally, historians must remember that Cromwell did not support the readmission of the Jews because he considered them to be the most important people of God. The Jews were to be converted to Christianity, not the other way around; it was English Protestants who were to play the leading role of guiding humankind toward the end of time.

³² English millenarian expectations in this period are usually linked with the group known as the 'Fifth Monarchy Men'. It is, however, necessary to remember that eschatological hope was not restricted to this group and may be found among the writings of several other figures such as, for example, John Dury and Samuel Hartlib. For more information on the 'Fifth Monarchy' group, see Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*.

From Cromwell's point of view, at stake was the dominion of English Protestants over all other religious practices—particularly Catholicism and Judaism—and their consequent submission. He expected that—sooner rather than later—Jews would convert to Protestantism, and this explains the urgent need to obtain the Parliament's approval for the readmission of the Jews to England. Jewish conversion had, in effect, become a matter of state. Notwithstanding this, ben Israel's moderate tone may also help to explain why a book written by a Jew could be so appealing to such a large number of Christian and Jewish readers alike.

As noted above, ben Israel was a man of his time; he lived in Amsterdam, a cosmopolitan city whose doors were open to the world by virtue of the heavy commercial traffic of her harbor and where Jews were not confined to ghettos.³³ In fact, some Sephardim were well-known and successful merchants, craftsmen, and intellectuals. Consequently, one should not be surprised at the existence of ongoing interaction between the Sephardic community and the non-Jewish world of the city. This interaction between the two communities explains why ben Israel got involved with men such as Dury.³⁴ The Amsterdam *status quo*, however, was fragile; Sephardim were allowed to follow their religion in the Dutch Republic, but not to do so publicly nor to express contrary opinions regarding official local religious beliefs.³⁵ Having the Jewish community *in loco* was beneficial for the Dutch Republic and its overseas enterprises and supported the development and consequent enrichment of the Republic, but they were far from being equal partners, particularly when it came to religious matters. At the same time, it is important to remember that, in intellectual and academic terms, these Jews were highly reputable, and their Christian peers regularly sought their opinion. This may help to explain why Dury and his fellow millenarians had addressed ben Israel at the time.

There are several aspects of ben Israel's mission to Cromwell which require further explanation. First, it is necessary to review some elements of his personal relationship with Dury and the other Englishmen that might have influenced his writings and even his later stay at London.

³³ For a description of Sephardic Amsterdam with particular attention to Jews of Portuguese origin, see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*.

³⁴ For further notes on the complexity of such interactions, see Henry Méchoulan, 'Menasseh and the World of the Non-Jew', in *Menasseh Ben Israel and his World* (ed. Y. Kaplan, H. Méchoulan and R. H. Popkin; Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 15; Leiden: Brill, 1989), pp. 83–97.

³⁵ For further information regarding the Portuguese nation of Amsterdam, see Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*.

Second, the fact that a diplomatic embassy had been sent to Amsterdam to speak with the leaders of the Jewish community—as described by ben Israel in his petition *To His Highnesse the Lord Protector* in 1655—allows the consideration of his voyage as the direct consequence of such talks.³⁶ Apparently the objective of this embassy was to convince ben Israel and the Jewish community of the general English support for their cause.

In 1649 ben Israel wrote to Dury regarding the content of Montezinos' report:

By the occasion of the questions you propose unto me concerning this adjoined Narrative of Mr. Antonio Montezinos, I, to give you satisfaction, **have written instead of a Letter a Treatise**, which I shortly will publish & whereof you shall receive so many copies as you desire. In this Treatise I handle of the first inhabitants of America which I believe were of the Ten Tribes; moreover that they are scattered also in other Countries, & that they keep their true Religion, as hoping to return againe into the Holy Land in due time.³⁷

It is necessary to acknowledge the existence of correspondence between the two men at least since 1644; the two appear to be engaged in a discussion concerning the finding of the 'Lost Tribes' in South America, a question which later became part of the discussion concerning the establishment of the divine kingdom on earth. In addition, this letter of ben Israel is an answer to an earlier letter from Dury on this particular episode and the subsequent rumors. As ben Israel's words indicate, the issue was of such importance that he had 'written instead of a Letter a Treatise'. This 'Treatise' is the *Esperança de Israel*.

In a following letter to Dury, ben Israel clearly states that he believes the Israelites were the first founders of America and that the ten tribes were not just in America but scattered in many different countries, waiting for the right moment to reappear and to reunite in the lands of Assyria and Egypt.³⁸ This does not contradict his later opinion in *Esperança de Israel* that Indians were largely not descended from the 'Lost Tribes': although underlining the fact that Jews could be found everywhere in the world, since the ten tribes had been dispersed by divine will, they should

³⁶ Menasseh ben Israel, *To His Highnesse the Lord Protector of the Common-wealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The humble addresses of Menasseh Ben Israel, a divine, and doctor of physick, in behalfe of the Jewish nation* (London: s.n., 1655), p. 3.

³⁷ Menasseh ben Israel, *Menasseh ben Israel's Mission to Oliver Cromwell: Being a Reprint of the Pamphlets Published by Menasseh ben Israel to Promote the Re-Admission of the Jews to England, 1649–1656* (Nabu Public Domain Reprints, 2011), p. lxxviii, (my highlights).

³⁸ Ben Israel, *Menasseh ben Israel's Mission to Oliver Cromwell*, p. lxxviii, letter 3.

not be seen as the ancestors of the American Indians. Furthermore, ben Israel forecasts—and in this he follows biblical prophecies—that when the moment comes all the tribes will be reunited under ‘one Prince the Messiah the Sonne of David’.³⁹ Ben Israel’s depiction of Jewish reality underlines the divine character (and thus necessity) of the dispersion and hiding of the Jewish tribes. He mentions, for example, how some Jews had found protection among Christian princes during the Spanish Inquisition; according to ben Israel, this was part of Yahweh’s plan. He does not doubt that the day in which the Messiah was to come was imminent and that sacred prophecies would soon be fulfilled.

In ben Israel’s letters to Dury his awareness of how cautious he had to be when handling such issues is clear. This is particularly obvious when he mentions the Spanish Inquisition and the protection that some Christian leaders had provided to Jews. In publicly recognizing the support of such princes, one may understand him as implying that they would divinely be rewarded later. In this fashion he attempted to demonstrate to the English that the Jews, and Yahweh, would likewise recognize English support and show their appreciation for any protection found in their realm. More important, perhaps, is the fact that in these letters ben Israel does not mention Christ; he speaks instead of a Messiah, a son of David. This is quite important, because when analyzing this correspondence one is obliged to question how ben Israel found the balance between the Sephardic quest for the Messiah and its Christian correspondent, the imminent second coming of Christ. In fact, the issue is even more important when later he uses the book as part of his appeal for the readmission of the Jews to England.⁴⁰ Along similar lines, in his petition *To His Highnesse the Lord Protector*, ben Israel clearly makes use of the biblical prophecies regarding the end of the world as well as the establishment of the divine kingdom as described in the book of Daniel, but excludes the description found in Revelation. By doing so, he shows a moderate tone while narrating a divinely-planned world history, in which all of these different groups were part of the divine plan in one way or another. Additionally, when referring to biblical prophecy ben Israel takes the time to list the names of some of the previous leaders who had supported the Jews, so that he can

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ The Jews were expelled from England in 1290 by an edict of Edward I. The official explanation is that the Jews had failed to follow the Statute of Jewry. This edict became widely popular; the expulsion met little resistance and was implemented quite quickly. It would take 350 years, until 1656, for the Jews to be officially readmitted to England.

later compare them to Cromwell and to the English Commonwealth. By doing this, ben Israel confirms that the supportive role to be played by the English toward the chosen people would later be rewarded by Yahweh.⁴¹

As part of his mission to Cromwell—a mission which he was apparently reluctant to undertake for some years, as we have already observed—several documents were sent by ben Israel to Cromwell, to formally appeal for the readmission of the Jews into England.⁴² An English copy of the well-known *Esperança de Israel* was sent together with a petition in which ben Israel addresses Cromwell directly, explaining the advantages of being friends with the Jews and how the Jews could help to improve the English realm.

To these two documents one should also add a letter subsequently sent by ben Israel to Cromwell.⁴³ This letter, written in French, contains a clear list of ben Israel's requests. Some of these could already be found in the earlier petition, but some were new requests. They were: first, that the Jews would be readmitted to England as if they were English subjects; second, that they were allowed to build synagogues not only in England but all over the English Empire; third, that they be allowed to have their own cemetery; fourth, that they would be allowed to trade freely, as any other merchants; fifth, that a person of quality would be chosen to verify and issue passports in the case of readmission and to make admitted Jews swear their allegiance to England; sixth, that they would be allowed to have their own magistrates to judge internal matters of the nation as well as be able to appeal to English civil courts; and, seventh, that in the case of the existence of laws against their nation, that these should be revoked to allow their legal presence in the realm.⁴⁴ According to rumors circulating at the time, the Sephardim were willing to negotiate a price for such benefits.

Ben Israel's petition is so direct and explicit that one can understand why it may have caused the division among those who had been called to

⁴¹ Ben Israel, *To His Highnesse the Lord Protector*, 1–3.

⁴² Ben Israel did not go to England immediately. In fact, he questioned the ambassadors' arguments and therefore first sent his son to get a sense of what was happening in England and whether the support for the Jewish cause was real or not. His son, Samuel, lived in England during a period when Hebrew studies flourished in Oxford and Cambridge, as the English Protestants were trying to put together the most up-to-date translation of the sacred texts. Samuel obtained a forged diploma from Oxford and used it to convince his father that the English were serious supporters of their quest as they were treating them as if their equals.

⁴³ Ben Israel, *Menasseh ben Israel's Mission to Oliver Cromwell*, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiv.

⁴⁴ Ben Israel, *Menasseh ben Israel's Mission to Oliver Cromwell*, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiv.

take part on the Whitehall Conference in December 1655 to decide upon the readmission of the Jews to England. Could ben Israel's straightforward tone be explained by the support he felt he would receive from the English Philo-Semites and from Cromwell? Issues regarding commerce and equal rights with other English subjects were definitely, and understandably, questioned by some of those called to attend the Whitehall conference.

The Philo-Semitism of seventeenth-century England, described by several scholars, offered solid conditions in support of the Jewish quest to be officially readmitted to the realm.⁴⁵ It is also likely that Cromwell, as Lord Protector, saw the Jews and their conversion as fundamental to the path toward reaching salvation and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, led by England. In fact, there were already many Jews living in England, although they were careful not to practice their faith publicly and to keep away from public view.⁴⁶ So, why did ben Israel engage in this mission at this particular time? What had changed in England (and/or in The Netherlands) that allowed him to think that Jewish efforts toward this quest would be more successful than they had been before? And why had England suddenly become a desirable place for Jews?

Allow us a quick interlude to elaborate on how Catholic and Protestant eschatological hope differs. Whilst the former emphasized the importance of individual eschatology and reaffirmed the Church's role as a mediator between God and the individual, the latter stressed the whole community and thus the role played by providential history.⁴⁷ Moreover, early Protestantism contained Lutheran interpretations which accentuated a certain tone of worldly pessimism and thus framed the Reformation itself in the scope of providential history. Eschatological hope subsequently became a central feature of the English Reformation, which can be observed as early as the defeat of the Armada in 1588 and onward to the ascent of Cromwell. It was a consequence of the defeat of Charles I that the famous 'Fifth Monarchy Men' group emerged in English society.⁴⁸ These understood it to be believers' responsibility to create the perfect time of the end through their

⁴⁵ On this subject, see Katz, *Philo-Semitism*.

⁴⁶ The Dormido case has to be considered as an exception, as he was the first Jew to address the Protector, requesting his support and protection to regain his property back from the Portuguese Inquisition while also appealing for the readmission of the Jews and Cromwell's protection of the nation.

⁴⁷ Robin Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair: Western Apocalypticism: 1500–1800', in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (ed. B. McGinn, J. J. Collins and S. J. Stein; New York: Continuum, 1998), pp. 143–84 (161).

⁴⁸ For further information see Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*.

militancy, breaking away from the idea that the central role would be played by providential history. Notwithstanding this, they appeared disillusioned by Cromwell's government; they were expecting the Kingdom of Christ to be established, not for Cromwell to become Lord Protector.

It is among this particular environment of religious tension that a wave of Philo-Semitism rose in England, a movement believing strongly in the conversion of the Jews as if a necessary pre-condition for the end of time and thus creating the perfect opportunity for the Jews to formally appeal to Cromwell for their official re-admittance in the realm.⁴⁹ The combination of all of these circumstances created what appeared to be a favorable environment to the Jewish quest.

As already observed, both Sephardim and English Protestants had clear and particular objectives regarding the future divine kingdom. The first were not merely searching for another safe place where they could live legally before being allowed to return to the Holy Land. On the contrary, given the messianic expectations and the belief that the coming of the Messiah was imminent, Jews were also searching for a way to be allowed to express their religious beliefs in public. At the same time the English were creating their own imperial concept: they no longer thought of the English realm as a simple worldly imperial power—the Commonwealth of Nations—but were extending and adapting the imperial idea to include the theological concept of a kingdom of God on earth of which they sought leadership, similar to what Charles V and Phillip II had previously done. The English government understood itself as replacing the Pope and the Church, and it is possible to draw a comparison between it and the medieval figure of the 'last emperor' who would lead humanity toward the end of time and the establishment of the divine kingdom of God on earth.⁵⁰ This imperial goal is one of the fundamental elements requiring attention when analyzing English interest in the evangelization of the New World and the conversion of the Jews: both were necessary insofar as universal religion had to be achieved before the kingdom of God could be established on earth.

Cromwell's apparent support for the Jewish cause is accordingly easy to understand. The major problem to address regarding the sequence of ben Israel's petition, and one of the major aspects discussed at the

⁴⁹ For further information on English Philo-Semitism, see Katz, *Philo-Semitism*.

⁵⁰ For further information on this issue of the 'Last Emperor', see Bernard McGinn, 'Apocalypticism and Church Reform: 1100–1500', in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (ed. B. McGinn, J. J. Collins and S. J. Stein; New York: Continuum, 1998), pp. 74–109.

Whitehall Conference, is the request that the Jews be able to build synagogues and practice Judaism publicly.⁵¹ Clearly it was not in English interests to allow such public demonstrations of a religious faith other than the official one, nor was it in their best interest to allow Jews to have their own magistrates; since it might allow them to think that they held 'full citizenship', as it was expressed in the recommendation issued by the sub-committee nominated to evaluate the Jewish petition for readmission. Many English people were indeed questioning whether they should allow a nation that blasphemed the name of Christ to legally settle among them, as Katz reminds us.⁵²

As it turned out, the events of the Whitehall Conference underlined the divisions in the public opinion regarding the re-admittance of Jews to England. Political and religious arguments were used by both sides to argue in favor and against. Economic arguments were also used to support the Jews' re-admittance, based on the profit England might make from the integration of Jewish traders into English economic enterprises.⁵³

Returning to ben Israel, his writings and their reception in England, it is necessary to underline the importance of the role played by English millenarians in this historical episode. This is especially relevant in explaining ben Israel's belief that the matter would soon be resolved favorably. Ben Israel was, however, mistaken: given the enormous divisions among those called by Cromwell to attend the conference, it was impossible to reach an agreement as quickly as initially thought.

Divine Empires and Tolerance

Modern historians define an empire by the existence of a political leader, law, borders, language and a system of administration common to diverse geographical territories.⁵⁴ This definition is the outcome of the early modern wars between Iberian and other European powers over the new oversea territories. Applying such a concept of empire in this particular case may not be advisable since we are neither describing an empire *de jure* nor an empire *de facto*. Furthermore, Christian imperialism must be

⁵¹ Ben Israel, *Menasseh ben Israel's Mission to Oliver Cromwell*.

⁵² Katz, *Philo-Semitism*, 209.

⁵³ Katz, *Philo-Semitism*, 190–231.

⁵⁴ To follow this question regarding the concept of empire, we suggest James Muldoon, *Empire and Order: The Concept of Empire, 800–1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), and E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

understood in light of eschatological hope, namely the future establishment of the divine kingdom of God and the role to be played by Christendom in this process.⁵⁵ Over the centuries, constant tension between spiritual and temporal powers has existed regarding the leadership of humankind. While in some periods there was an unquestionable leadership of the spiritual power—the Church—there are moments in history marked by severe opposition to the Church by secular leaders, for example, in the time of Charlemagne and Frederick Barbarossa. Some of the Gregorian Reformation's goals, by contrast, were to make clear the supremacy of the papacy over secular power.⁵⁶ The question of which institution held the foremost role became part of Western Christianity's essence and would develop later into the more elaborate concepts of empire as expressed, for example, by Charles V and Philip II of Spain. According to these two rulers there would be an Empire of the Christians, led by the pope and the emperor, with one having dominion over spiritual issues and the other holding temporal dominion.⁵⁷

The identity of these leaders changed during the Reformation, since Protestant kingdoms no longer recognized the authority of Rome, and it is in this context that one should frame English millenarian movements and, particularly, the efforts of evangelization in the New World undertaken by English millenarians. Again, the heads of power in Europe were changing.

Although one must account for all of the afore-mentioned changes, the fact is that what we are still dealing with is the ancient Jewish-Christian

⁵⁵ For further details about the concept of 'empire' and how it developed over the centuries, see Muldoon, *Empire and Order*.

⁵⁶ This can be seen taking shape in the works of Joachim of Fiore. See Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1985).

⁵⁷ The division between temporal and spiritual powers is an ancient reality, with Jesus already making a distinction between what belonged to Caesar and what belonged to the Father (Matt 22:21). Later, this tradition was reaffirmed by the Church Fathers. The fall of the Roman Empire in the West and the rise of the Church as the main source of power were, however, at the basis of a debate concerning the ownership of each type of power. One of the most charismatic episodes revolves around the figure of Charlemagne and how he was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III. This episode, which could simply be understood as Charlemagne's submission to the papacy, is questionable, as most suspect that Charlemagne effectively forced the pope to do it, thus supporting the opposite conclusion: the pope was now submitted to the will of the emperor. This issue was transformed into one of the most important debates over the following centuries; it appears that a clear solution was not found until the nineteenth century, when one observes a formal division between state and church taking place.

apocalyptic goal of reaching the end of time, allowing judgment to take place and the establishment of the divine kingdom as described in Daniel and in Revelation.

Accordingly, observing how ben Israel and Cromwell acted together with regard to the re-admittance of the Jews to England is not as strange as it may sound. Further, it can shed light on eschatological thought during this period as well as the way in which subsequent movements shaped early modern Europe. In addition, it is necessary to recall that ben Israel was attempting to secure a safe harbor for those of his 'nation' while Cromwell, inspired by that spirit of conversion common in his days, was trying to attract Jews with the objective of later converting them to Christianity. Of course, the fact that the Jews were understood as the people of the Old Covenant with God played an influential role in Cromwell's decision. Thus this supposed religious 'tolerance' of England was in fact 'toleration', a representation of state politics in the sense that it represented the Parliament's means to achieve a major goal: that the peoples of the Old and New covenants would gather together before the end of time.⁵⁸ The most interesting point is that neither of these two men gave up on their own beliefs, although one may see how, by not attacking the other's position, they were able to find suitable bridges to reach their own personal goals. In this sense, English imperial goals expanded further into eschatological quests through the official welcoming of the Jewish request for re-admittance. Englishmen could see themselves in opposition to the Catholic countries that had expelled and persecuted Jews and thus as a chosen nation, proving that they were the more tolerant and consequently the better and more suitable candidate for the role of leading humankind to its divinely predestined end.

To conclude, it appears clear to us that ben Israel was not just aware of the consequences and impact that small differences in the text of his two books could have, but probably actively worked to make sure they did exist in the text. Because he was particularly interested in finding a safe place for his people and making sure that Jews would be able to openly practice their faith without fearing persecution, ben Israel had to think as a diplomat, building bridges between different religious groups. Cromwell's objectives are also very clear: the Jews were to be received back into

⁵⁸ For a more complete definition of 'tolerance' (one's philosophy towards the other) and 'toleration' (the state's position regarding the different), see the Introduction of Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

England because they were to be converted to Christianity, apart from any economic benefit that could be obtained from their re-establishment in the realm.

It is true that the two men used each other to fulfill their own goals. That fact, however, does not diminish the value of the text of *Esperança de Israel*. On the contrary, this small book survived over the centuries; the many and successive translations and editions are proof of this. Why? Most probably it was because its contents allow readers to believe that the promised kingdom of God was imminent, and the biblical prophecies about to be fulfilled. This was true whether the reader was a Jew or a Christian, Catholic or Protestant, since ben Israel words' were chosen so carefully that the text appeals to most descendants of the Religions of the Book who were interested in millennial questions. Moreover, the finding of the 'Lost Tribes' of Israel was, as it still is, an issue of utmost importance for both Jews and Christians (in a broader sense) as their finding should mark the beginning of the end of time as promised in the sacred books.

*MARE CLAUSUM, LEVIATHAN, AND OCEANA: BIBLE CRITICISM,
SECULARISATION AND IMPERIALISM IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
ENGLISH POLITICAL AND LEGAL THOUGHT**

Mark Somos

How did the West move from a condition where theology was the sovereign discipline, able and willing to influence all others, to a state where the arts, the sciences, law, and politics are self-sufficient in method and cognisance? The shift is a fact, historical and stubborn. Turning-points like Machiavelli, Montaigne, Descartes, the Peace of Westphalia and Hobbes, as well as processes like the centralisation and rationalisation of states, have been posited to explain secularisation. ‘Premature secularisation’, that well-worn phrase, is a salutary caveat against these, but neither an answer nor the start of one.¹

From the fourth to the seventeenth century Christian theology underpinned all aspects of thought in the West, from the natural sciences to international law. As the Reformation eroded doctrinal monopoly, much of Europe’s conceptual edifice broke down. The consequent depth, range and urgency of doubts and debates help to explain the ferocious Wars of Religion, one of the greatest traumas in European history. The solution and settlement required new intellectual foundations. Numerous attempts were made, including the reassertion of doctrinal monopoly, the reduction of Christianity to a widely acceptable minimal set of tenets, the effective replacement of Christianity with alternative metaphysical systems like Neoplatonism, Christian Kabbalah or *priscae theologiae* variously labeled Egyptian, Orphic, Trojan or Druidic, and so on. With historical hindsight we can see that secularisation, involving the radical disconnection of religion from politics, was the only solution that could have worked. Secularisation is the process whereby Europe’s *Weltanschauung* was rebuilt without theology. A reaffirmation of the old orthodoxy, the victory of a new one, or

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¹ The phrase comes from D. Forbes, *Hume’s Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

the co-existence of several exclusivist theologico-political ideologies, were unsustainable options.

My working hypothesis models secularisation as a cumulative and incomplete historical process, contingent to the West, and often the unintended consequence of limited *politique* designs for stability and peace. It is best explained through a double focus on broad historical developments and intense episodes. On the one hand, secularisation describes a generic set of solutions to the generic problem of ongoing religious-political conflict, including some developments in doctrinal ecumenism and minimalism and the reprioritisation of natural over divine law. On the other hand, some Italian humanists and neo-sceptics, the French 'New Historians,' the Leiden Circle and some seventeenth-century English thinkers represent intense periods when the urgency of secularisation prompted game-changing works with long-term effects.² These groups spearheaded efforts to systematically and cumulatively remove religion from politics, while secularisation's components continued to play out in several broader, diffuse discourses around Europe. The ecumenism and irenicism of those who strove to reunite Christianity, for instance, increasingly turned toward a Christian minimalism that reduced the religion to barely more than a code of ethics, or even mere behaviour. Regardless of the intention and religiosity of the agent, the cost of saving Christianity proved to be its removal from politics. Secularisation arose from irenicism, patriotism, ecumenism, and even the various projects to restore Christianity by re-emphasising its mystical, irrational and irreducibly individualistic elements. It was tangentially to these large intellectual movements that small bands of self-conscious secularisers prioritised political stability and worked systematically, often with a division of labour, to reform the European world view.

Yet—how to draw a credible, robust and informative trajectory from the medieval epistemic and disciplinary supremacy of theology to the secularisation of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries? One can trace the process in the natural sciences, comparative mythography, drama and pedagogic theory, even theology, all with equal validity. To sharpen the focus, secularisation is traced here through biblical exegesis in seventeenth-century English political and legal theory.

Lawyers and political theorists played a prominent part in secularisation. The Italians Andrea Alciato (1492–1550) and Carolus Sigonius

² M. Somos, *Secularisation and the Leiden Circle* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

(1524–1584), the French Jacques Cujas (1520–1590) and Étienne Pasquier (1529–1615), and the Dutch Petrus Cunaeus (1586–1638) and Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) responded to the seemingly interminable Wars of Religion by gradually deconstructing the biblical foundations of law. Tridentine reforms (1545–1563), the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572) and subsequent crown policies, as well as the Synod of Dordt (1618–1619) reversed or eroded the political effects of these episodes. Yet these thinkers' legal method, concepts and arguments enabled John Selden (1584–1654), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), James Harrington (1611–1677) and other English thinkers to reprioritise natural over divine law and to secularise law, the state, and civil society. The primary aim was to create domestic political stability; an often unintended consequence was an advantage in 'soft imperialism'.³ Contrary to Iberian and French colonial projects, Dutch and English thinkers worked out a way to encounter native rulers and legal systems without having to take a position on issues like just war, missionary obligation, forced conversion, slavery, or non-Christians' right to property and sovereignty. The new system proved effective in securing non-European co-operation and minimising the economic and ideological costs of commercial and colonial expansion. It created, structured, and maintained the British Empire before the nineteenth-century re-theologisation of imperialism.

The continued reputation of the three texts examined here for their centrality to English political and legal theory makes the analysis of their biblical exegetical techniques an ideal illustration of this chapter in the history of secularisation. For this purpose, they also complement and enhance each other. Selden's *Mare clausum* (1635), which claimed exclusive British

³ I try to use 'imperialism' advisedly. For Selden and Harrington, *imperium* could mean power or dominion in general, or overseas commercial and colonial influence. When they meant policy concerning existing holdings and expansion abroad, they usually, though not always, qualified the term. This terminological caveat becomes more complicated by their discussions of Roman *imperium* as lessons or even models for England. While shifts in *imperium*'s meaning can be crucial for right interpretation, there is no need for exhaustive terminological indices of all usages. Some semantic shifts and deliberate ambiguities of *imperium*, for instance from Roman historians through Machiavelli to Harrington, map onto each other and reduce the need for terminological caution; others increase it. Instead of imposing preconceptions, I hope to allow *imperium*'s early modern meanings' relationship with today's connotations, including postcolonial sensibilities, to arise from the textual analysis and contextualisation. For an influential formulation of British soft imperialism see J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (London: Macmillan, 1883). 'Soft' features of an empire include an organic state; a shared sense of identity; provincial rulers aspiring to emulate a metropolitan elite; and a continued but negotiated role for local courts, traditions and government.

dominion over the seas and was used as a foundational legal text by several English regimes throughout the seventeenth century, is recognised as a milestone in English imperialism. The power and controversy of Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) has been evident since its first appearance, together with its profound and multifarious influence on later thinkers. While the extent to which Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) shaped English republicanism remains vigorously contested, its significance for English imperialism is clear from both its contents and reception. Yet the nature and aim of biblical criticism in these works remain understudied. Exegetical techniques even in *Leviathan*, where they are now recognised as significant, have rarely been subjected to elementary analysis. This chapter hopes to show the importance of such work, and illustrate its potential by adumbrating some of its implications for the political and legal theory supporting seventeenth-century English secularisation and imperialism. In particular, I examine the nature and role of biblical criticism in Selden's counter-argument to common property, in Hobbes' *unum necessarium*, and in Harrington's prescriptions for the proper role of the clergy, popular sovereignty, and English imperialism.

Selden: The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origins of Global Private Property

Long recognised as a landmark in the history of public international law and the law of the sea, Selden's *Mare clausum* is both an iconic and synecdochal case of the secularisation of law that enabled soft imperialism. Politically, *Mare clausum* is Selden's reply to Grotius' *Mare liberum*, countering the Dutch claim to free navigation and fishing with a clear, powerful and influential statement of British dominion over the seas. Regarding biblical criticism, however, Selden's method is remarkably close to Grotius'. Both lawyers positioned their contribution on a theoretical level above biblical justifications and chosen nation theories, thereby seeking to systematically prevent religious engagement with, or adaptations from, their writings. Biblical criticism was an integral part of their strategy.⁴ Selden's claim that all property was originally private is also the part of *Mare clausum* where a close look at his biblical exegesis can tell

⁴ For Grotius' highly controversial exegetical method in *De iure praedae*, chapter 12 of which became *Mare liberum* (1609), see M. Somos, 'Secularization in *De Iure Praedae*: From Bible Criticism to International Law', *Grotiana* 26–28 (2005–2007), pp. 147–91.

us the most about the significance of biblical criticism for seventeenth-century legal debates over imperialism. Selden explicitly names and refutes Roman and Christian legal and theological assertions that mankind originally held everything in common; that some things, like air, fish and the seas, continue in common; and that in special circumstances, such as extreme privation or a state's dissolution, recourse may be had to the residual or resurgent legitimacy of common property.

Selden starts by citing Lactantius' *Divine Institutes* V.5 to explain the classical accounts of an original communality of property as poetic license. Lactantius believes that Cicero, Ovid, Virgil and Aratus were not referring to shared dominion in their descriptions of the golden age, but to a spirit of sharing and the common enjoyment of the Earth. Selden then begins to extend Lactantius' comparative and historicising debunking of classical myths to Old Testament passages.⁵ He reinterprets Gen 9:1–2 not as a divine command but as a figurative donation of the world for Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japhet, to hold in common. He adds Gen 10:5–25 and allocates Noah's three sons to geographical regions, over which they 'settled themselves as private Lords.'⁶ Selden asserts that Noah had private dominion, revived after the Flood in the same form it was granted by God to Adam (Gen 1:2, 28). Both patriarchs had exclusive, full dominion over the world, which they divided and passed on voluntarily. Cain built a city called Enoch, and settled there. Commerce arose naturally, and in turn required contracts, judges, and boundary marks. Further divisions into smaller units of private property followed. Selden argues that universal law, whether natural or divine, neither proscribed nor prescribed but permitted both the emergence of numerous private owners by extension of the voluntary bequests of universal dominion-holders (like Adam and Noah), and the transformation of common rights to enjoyment into full-title dominion.

Selden's next example for the permissive positive law of private property is Canaan, within the land of the Sons of Ham, stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates '*and unto the utmost Sea, or the remotest, which is the great or Western Sea.*'⁷ By the latter Selden means not the Dead Sea but the Persian Gulf. His source is a manuscript of the Samaritan

⁵ For similar debunking manoeuvres see Somos, *Secularisation*, chapters III and IV.

⁶ J. Selden, *Of the Dominion, Or, Ownership of the Sea Two Books* (transl. M. Nedham, London: William Du-Gard, 1652); transl. of *Mare clausum seu De dominio maris libri duo* (London: William Stanesby, 1635), Liv.17–20, at 19 (henceforth DOS).

⁷ DOS, Liv.25.

Pentateuch (henceforth, SP) of Gen 10:19 and Deut 34:3; the phrase ‘*and unto the utmost sea*’ comes from the latter passage. Conventional biblical geography locates Ham’s lands in the Fertile Crescent and limits the Canaanites to modern-day Israel, just stretching into Jordan at the city of Lasha (as mentioned in Gen 10:19). By replacing the Jordan with the Euphrates as the other river, besides the Nile, which bordered Canaanite territory, Selden ascribes the whole Fertile Crescent to them. The deliberateness of this shift is confirmed when Selden continues by describing the land assigned to Japheth’s sons as outside the Fertile Crescent, citing Num 34:6–7 and 34:12. However, Num 34:2 explicitly refers to Canaan, and the others passages are traditionally interpreted to do the same. Selden points out that Josh 15:1–5 gives the same description of a region that was shared out by Joshua, but he fails to mention that this account applies to the land of Judah’s progeny instead. Selden’s final biblical support in *Mare clausum*, I.v for using seas as territorial boundaries is Ps 72:8. Although the best support for his argument, it is the only one that Selden simply notes among the marginalia, without discussion.

Selden’s use of the Samaritan Pentateuch for Genesis and Deuteronomy here is striking not only for his revision of sacred geography. Although Jerome, Eusebius, Diodorus of Tarsus, Procopius, Cyril of Alexandria, Syn-cellus and others used and cited the SP, it gradually fell into oblivion in the West. Scaliger reasserted SP’s importance in *De emendatione temporum* (1583), but his own prized manuscript was the Samaritan Chronicle, not the Pentateuch.⁸ Peiresc tried to obtain a copy, but the ship carrying it was captured by pirates.⁹ In modern times the first complete copy, dating from 1345/6 CE and known now as Codex B, was finally acquired in 1616 in Damascus by the redoubtable Pietro della Valle (1586–1652) and

⁸ Leiden’s first SP manuscript is from J. Golius’ collection, registered in the Leiden University Library in 1629, now known as Or. 6. Based on a letter from Golius, Gassendi published this catalogue in 1630 (P. Gassendi, *Catalogus rarorum librorum*... [Paris: Antonius Vitray, 1630]). See J. J. Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden* (Leiden: Ter Lugt, 2007), vol. 1, pp. 11, 17. When Golius acquired it and whether Or. 6 was in the University Library or kept by Golius in his house (despite being purchased with University funds) and auctioned off by his successors in 1696 remain to be established. See the discussion in J. J. Witkam, *Jacobus Golius (1596–1667) en zijn Handschriften* (Leiden: Brill, 1980). On balance, Golius probably acquired it on his 1625–9 travels (i.e. when or just after James Ussher obtained his copy) rather than on his first visit to the East in 1622 with the Dutch embassy to Morocco.

⁹ P. N. Miller, ‘A Philologist, a Traveller and an Antiquary Rediscover the Samaritans in Seventeenth-Century Paris, Rome and Aix: Jean Morin, Pietro della Valle and N.-C. Fabri de Peiresc’, in *Gelehrsamkeit als Praxis: Arbeitsweisen, Funktionen, Grenzbereiche* (ed. H. Zedlhauser and M. Mulsow; Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), pp. 123–46.

sent by M. de Sancy, then French ambassador to Constantinople, to the Oratorians in Paris in 1623. Its *editio princeps* was prepared by Joannes Morinus (1591–1659) in Le Jay's 1628–45 Polyglot (in vol. 6, 1645), from which Walton's famous Polyglot reproduced it in 1657.¹⁰

SP played several roles in political and legal controversies until the nineteenth century. It was understood that the Samaritans arose from Jewish and Gentile intermingling, and that Jews and Samaritans entertained cordial hostility to one another.¹¹ Samaritans rejected all Jewish sacred texts except the Pentateuch, and raised a temple on Mount Gerizim to worship according to Mosaic law. It was popular among early modern Bible scholars to argue that the mutual hostility between Samaritans and Jews stopped all interaction; therefore the insignificance of textual variants between the Torah and SP was another proof of Moses' authorship and the text's faultless preservation throughout the millennia.¹² Others focused on the differences and turned them to sectarian use.¹³ Unusually, Selden rejected the historical accounts of this hostility, thereby sidestepping this controversy. In his edition Morinus praised SP and even the Greek Septuagint at the expense of the (Hebrew) Masoretic Text, and joined to this eclectic reprimatation a systematic attack on Protestant biblical exegesis. Many contemporaries recognised the extremity of his view. Their impression was confirmed by the posthumous and often reprinted *Exercitationes biblicae de hebraeici graecique textus sinceritate* (1660) where Morinus, following but going beyond Louis Cappel (1585–1658), demolished the theory that the Hebrew text, including the vowel points, remained unchanged and uncorrupted since Moses.¹⁴

¹⁰ A. Schenker, 'The Polyglot Bibles of Antwerp, Paris and London: 1568–1658', in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation* (ed. M. Saebø; vol. 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), pp. 774–84, esp. pp. 779–81. The project for this Polyglot was conceived by Cardinal du Perron and J. du Thou. Morin was invited in 1628. See P. Gibert, 'The Catholic Counterpart and Response to the Protestant Orthodoxy', in Saebø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation* (vol. 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), pp. 758–73, at p. 768. Toomer dates SP's *editio princeps* in Le Jay's Polyglot, vol. vi, to 1632 (G. J. Toomer, *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009], p. 806).

¹¹ The usual early modern reference for this trope of Jewish-Samaritan hostility is Flavius Josephus. As he does with the Druids in his 1616 notes on Fortescue, Selden positions Flavius as a lawyer (DOS, Lxxiii.149).

¹² Toomer, *Selden*, p. 245.

¹³ E.g. Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620–1667) derived Protestant justifications from SP in *Exercitationes Anti-Morinianae* (Zurich: Tiguri, 1644). See also N. Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 418–19.

¹⁴ Gibert, 'Catholic'.

Cunaeus was a professor of law at Leiden when Grotius, his former fellow student, asked him to respond to *Mare clausum*. Though nothing came of this, it is worth noting Cunaeus' contribution to the re-evaluation of SP that occupied many scholars after the humanist clarion call of *ad fontes* and the Protestant embrace of *sola Scriptura*. In his 1617 *De Republica Hebraeorum*, reissued in Elsevier's famous *petites républiques* series in 1631, Cunaeus described the Samaritans as neither idolators nor proto-Protestant believers truer than the Jews, but a mixed bag of Gentiles, confused colonists, and inept syncretists.¹⁵ One can read Selden's defence of the Samaritans, and his unusual denial of Jewish-Samaritan animosity, as a rehabilitation of the value of religious syncretism during colonisation.

We established the importance of SP in Selden's innovative construction of the aetiology and law of global property rights. Where did he get his references from? Dating parts of *Mare clausum* is complicated by the fact that the initial version and the 1619 version (cleaned up for Buckingham and James VI/I, and perhaps improved until 1621) are lost. Selden may have let the manuscript lie fallow until 1630. He was arrested on 4 March 1629 and sent to the Tower, and at first was banned from access to books and writing material. This provision eased slightly from the end of July 1629. He was moved from the Tower to Marshalsea prison in January 1630, allowed access to London during the day, and to read and write in prison. He started on *De successione* and the second edition of *Titles of Honor*. Selden remained at Marshalsea until May 1631, when he was finally granted bail, though until January 1635 he had to renew it twice every year. Bourgchier updated James Ussher (1581–1656) several times about Selden's condition. It is in one of these letters, from June 1630, that he informed Ussher that Selden was preparing *Mare clausum* for publication.¹⁶ News about *Mare clausum* resumed again only in 1634. Despite fragmentary evidence of his re-engagement with the text, we can only speculate about Selden's expansions and revisions before the first publication, in 1635.

Further inquiry into Selden's inspiration to incorporate SP is one way of trying to narrow the gap between 1621 as *terminus a quo* and 1634 as *terminus ad quem* for the start of *Mare clausum*'s final revision. The two main possibilities are Ussher (after 1622) and Morinus (after 1631). Morinus studied at Leiden before converting to Catholicism, joining the

¹⁵ *De Republica Hebraeorum libri III* (Leiden: Elsevier, 1617), II.16, 17.

¹⁶ J. Ussher, *The Whole Works* (ed. C. R. Elrington; Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1829–64, 1847), xvi, 514, cited in Toomer, *Selden*, p. 390 n. 12.

Oratory, and taking orders. He visited England in 1625 in the retinue of Henrietta Maria. Beyond these and other tenuous personal connections, Selden's source could have been Morinus' 1631 *Exercitationes ecclesiasticae in utrumque Samaritanorum Pentateuchum*, even though it predates SP's *editio princeps*. Furthermore, Selden occasionally shares Morinus' distinctive hierarchy of sources, mentioned above. In addition to the preference for SP over others, in *Mare clausum* I.vi Selden attributes greater credibility to the Greek translation of Esther than to the Hebrew version, before he returns to Num 34:5 and offers his own translation from the Hebrew of *erunt exitus ejus in Mare*, instead of the *magni maris littore finietur* of Jerome.¹⁷ The Greek translators, he continues, provide a superior text to the Hebrew original because they follow SP, 'after their usual manner.'¹⁸

Despite features in common with Morinus' work after 1631, Selden's substantive engagement with SP may also date from his earlier exchanges with Ussher, who had considerable interest in this source. Eventually Ussher acquired six copies of SP, of varying quality, and attempted to arrange for a Protestant edition and publication before Morinus'. Ussher also provided extracts, lists of variants, transcripts and even loans of these copies to other scholars, including Loius de Dieu in 1629, and of course Selden.¹⁹ In a letter to Selden, dated 16 April 1622, Ussher mentions that he is eager for news from France concerning an edition of SP.²⁰ This letter is in reply to Selden's from 24 March. Selden's letter begins with an apology for not returning Ussher's *Nubiensis Geographiae*, presumably al-Idrisi's *Nuzhatul Mushtaq*, a twelfth-century book of travels and systematic geography, translated and abbreviated from a Maronite version and published in Paris in 1619 with a short appendix on Arabian cities, geography, history, manners, languages and religions.²¹ The unadorned tone, lack of

¹⁷ Except Selden transposes Jerome's 'maris magni.'

¹⁸ DOS, I.vi.32.

¹⁹ Letter CLIV in Ussher, *Whole Works*, XV.451–53, cited in J. G. Fraser, 'Ussher's Sixth Copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch', *VT* 21 (1971), pp. 100–102, at p. 100. Interestingly, Fraser conjectures that Ussher's sixth copy passed from de Dieu to Denis Nolin at the same Paris Oratory where Morinus worked, and is currently known as MS Samaritan 4 of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

²⁰ J. Ussher, *The Life of the Most Reverend Father in God, James Usher* [...] with *A Collection of Three Hundred Letters* (ed. R. Parr; London: Nathanael Ranew, 1686), Letter XLIX, p. 81. The *Life* and the *Letters* are paginated separately, and the *Letters'* pagination is erratic.

²¹ M. Ibn-Muhammad al Idrisi, *Geographia nubiensis: id est accuratissima totius orbis in septem climata divisi descriptio* (ed. and transl. G. Sionita and J. Hesronita; Paris: Hieronymus Blageart, 1619), an abbreviation and translation of *Kitab nuzhat al-mushtaq fi'khtiraq al-'afaq* (twelfth century CE). Selden cites this work in DOS I.vi.37; Lxxii.137; etc.

introduction, and references to prior business make it clear that this is not Selden's and Ussher's first exchange.²² Toomer dates their acquaintance and mutual, life-long admiration as early as 1609, but it is unclear whether 1622 was the first time they discussed SP specifically.²³ On balance, we can assume that Selden developed his remarkable role for SP before 1631. Another piece of circumstantial evidence for Selden's access to SP before Morinus' edition is the end of Selden's 1631 *De successionibus* ch. XXIV, entitled 'Discrepantes Pentateuchi Samaritani, in Legibus de Iure successionis, Lectiones, quae ab observationibus ac interpretamentis aliquot Magistrorum sunt dissonae'. It is a short (only three pages) but trenchant piece on SP's significance.

However, it is worth noting that while Ussher's, like Scaliger's, interest in Samaritan sources was chronological, Selden's use of SP in *Mare clausum* is closer to Grotius' neutralisation of the Bible in legal debate in *Mare liberum*. The similarity between Selden's and Grotius' legal rather than chronological interest in the diverse biblical exegetical traditions also suggests that it is worth keeping open the possibility that Selden revisited the *Mare clausum* draft before 1630. 1625 saw the appearance of Grotius' *De iure belli ac pacis* (henceforth DIBP). In parts of *Mare clausum*, Selden used DIBP to refute Grotius' own *Mare liberum*, therefore he certainly revised his draft between 1625 and *Mare clausum*'s first appearance in 1635.²⁴ Moreover, had his opening discussion of private property been inserted earlier, then the whole *Mare clausum* would have required a serious structural transformation. The key role of DIBP in *Mare clausum* I.iv, and of SP in *Mare clausum* I.v–vi, both suggest that the SP sections were put in after 1625. At the same time, the neutralisation of the Bible that Selden develops in *Mare clausum* I.v–vi, using SP (which he discussed with Ussher at least as early as 1622), is so close to *Mare liberum* that it is worth keeping an open mind about the possibility that Selden had recognised the potential of SP for a new argument on private property already before 1625. Another avenue worth pursuing is Ussher's own reference:

²² Selden's letter is XLVI in Parr, *Usher*, pp. 78–79.

²³ Toomer, *Selden*, p. 804.

²⁴ E.g. in *Mare clausum* Lxxvi Selden explicitly mentions, compares, contrasts, and responds to both *Mare liberum* and DIBP. DIBP is mentioned many times, including *Mare clausum* II.ii. Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 86, shows that *Mare clausum* is a response to DIBP as much as to *Mare liberum*. See also T. W. Fulton, *The Sovereignty of the Sea* (Edinburgh: Blackwood and Sons, 1911), pp. 348–49.

what made him expect a French edition in April 1622, before della Valle's copy reached Paris?

Another clue for a pre-1630 (if not pre-1625) revision comes from Selden's 1628 edition of the *Marmora Arundelliana*. This description and academic apparatus for the Arundel Marbles was eagerly awaited throughout the republic of letters. By 1625 Ussher owned a manuscript SP that he hoped to have someone edit and publish, and as Selden was preparing *Marmora* he asked Ussher for SP variants for Gen 5 (the genealogy from Abraham to Noah) and Gen 11 (the Tower of Babel). As Toomer points out, these passages seem to 'have no relevance to anything in the Marmor Parium.'²⁵ Selden may have been planning a broad chronological introduction that he later abandoned or, alternatively, he may have been revisiting the 1618/9 *Mare clausum* and constructing the stages in the biblical accounts of the transformation of universal rules of dominion, including Noah and the Tower of Babel. In any case, Ussher's learned reply concerning SP was gratefully acknowledged in the *Marmora*, which contains excerpts from SP. Ussher expressed his hope that Selden could have Samaritan types made for these excerpts and use them for a pioneering Protestant edition of SP; when this failed, he sent a manuscript to de Dieu in Leiden.²⁶ That attempt also failed and, as we saw, the eventual *editio princeps* was Morinus' contribution to the Paris Polyglot Bible.

Merely publishing SP, let alone attributing authority to it, remained highly contentious long after Selden's death. Selden's use of SP, his claim for its superiority in *Mare clausum*, and his radical reformulation of property as not communal but *ab initio* private, must be seen in this context. A case in point is Walton's great Polyglot, in many ways a fruit of the work of Selden, Pococke and Ussher on SP. Selden and Ussher were the key early patrons of the project and the first volume appeared in 1654, the year Selden died. Ussher, Pococke and many of Selden's friends, allies and admirers—including John Lightfoot and Patrick Young—made direct contributions to this Polyglot. Walton justified the inclusion of SP in a critical overview of the textual traditions in his famous Prolegomena to the Polyglot (originally published in 1657 but also reprinted separately for almost two centuries). Indeed, SP's inclusion was one reason why the Vatican placed Walton's Polyglot on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, while the nonconformist John Owen (1616–1683), among others, accused

²⁵ Toomer, *Selden*, p. 364.

²⁶ Toomer, *Selden*, p. 806.

Walton of aiding atheism. Walton's rejoinder to Owen, *The Considerator Considered* (1659), details his reliance on Selden's manuscripts and help, and again addresses and defends the use of SP.²⁷ Unlike Selden in *Mare clausum*, Walton regards SP as inferior to the Hebrew in terms of divine inspiration. At the same time, however, he demolishes Owen's objections to SP's use—namely that the Samaritans' true knowledge of the pristine version of the Torah, their creation of a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim, and early Christians' use of SP, are unhistorical fabrications. Walton even defends the Samaritans from the rabbis he cites in the Prolegomena, who 'out of their innate hatred [...] forge many calumnies and untruths against them.'²⁸ Walton counters Owen's proposition that no copy of SP survives by saying that he himself consulted one that belonged to a Samaritan priest in Damascus 'about four hundred years ago.'²⁹

In light of these loaded debates surrounding SP, Selden's reliance on the Samaritan version of Gen 10:19 and Deut 34:3 is indicative of both his philological and non-sectarian self-positioning, especially in an applied legal work like *Mare clausum*.³⁰ His reliance on SP to redraw sacred geography and reformulate the origins of private property effectively side-stepped contemporary uses of the Bible in imperial debates. Had Selden proceeded to trace a genealogy of the British back to one of Noah's sons, like many French lawyers did for the French, he could have easily constructed biblical justifications for the claim that they and they alone ended up—through inheritance, for instance—with full dominion over the seas. This, however, would have made him a chosen nation theorist, albeit of an expansionist, imperialist variety.³¹ Instead, Selden made the biblical foundation of his account of property critical of existing biblical imperialisms, yet so contentious as to be unusable for chosen nation arguments. From the perspective of the legal issue under consideration—sovereignty over the sea and Dutch *versus* British rights of passage and fishing—one should note that William Welwod criticised Grotius' *Mare liberum* for its treatment of the Bible as a source of law on par with pagan

²⁷ B. Walton, *The Considerator Considered* (London: Thomas Roycroft, 1659; repr. in H. J. Todd, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Rev. Brian Walton*; London, 1821), IX.viii–xi.

²⁸ Walton, *Considerator*, II.1–351, at p. 191.

²⁹ Todd, *Memoirs*, II.193.

³⁰ The peculiarity of this move is also noted by Toomer, *Selden*, p. 398.

³¹ For such seventeenth-century English examples see D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 81–90, i.a. on Samuel Purchas (1577?–1626).

sources.³² Selden's *Mare clausum*, supposedly in the same political camp as Welwod's *Abridgement*, was unlikely to be seen as more orthodox.

In sum, in *Mare clausum* I.v–vi Selden went to great lengths to establish biblical evidence for the use of seas as boundaries within which dominion applies, and then make this biblical evidence as radically different as possible from the biblical exegeses used in the established framework of legal disputation over territorial sovereignty. As SP has just become available for insertion into legal reasoning, Selden's choice signalled that 1) he regarded his treatment as original and 2) previous treatments (and therefore the conventional applications of the Bible to this issue) as inadequate, and that 3) his interpretation was deliberately as controversial as possible. Had this not been his intention, he could have chosen to position his argument in the existing framework of the Christian legal tradition, referring to arguments of Cajetan, Vázquez, Vitoria, Freitas, Welwod or others, through a philological disputation of the well-established biblical *loci* that these lawyers used to debate the use of seas as boundaries. Instead of putting SP variants to such polemical use, he replaced all other versions (Hebrew, Greek, Latin) with it.

On such contentious biblical foundations, Selden argued that seas have long been used to define territory. This becomes particularly important when, like Cunaeus and later Harrington, he identifies a range of reasons for the non-transferability of the biblical chosen nation, including the uniqueness of Jerusalem, the abrogation of Old Testament laws after Jesus, irreparable legal discontinuities already in the Old Testament between God's divine polity and its successors, and other reasons why God's commands to the Jews cannot be translated to territories outside the Holy Land. The Sabbath, tithes and other 'precepts and laws belonging to the Land of Israël' likewise lose force elsewhere.³³ The secularising implications of this refutation of all 'chosen nation' claims are tremendous. Aside from neutralising this type of claim for religious legitimacy, it also made *Mare clausum* a double-edged sword for James VI/I, Charles I, Oliver Cromwell and Charles II, who often had to walk a fine line between alienating and accommodating a range of partisan religious positions.

³² W. Welwod, *An Abridgement of All Sea-Lawes* (London: Humfrey Lownes, 1613). Fulton, *Sovereignty*, p. 355. Somos, 'Secularization', shows Grotius' techniques for neutralising the Bible in *De iure praedae*, and summarises Welwod's objections.

³³ DOS, I.vi.34–9, at p. 34; *passim*. Compare Cunaeus, DRH, I.ix–xi and *passim*. For the same in Grotius see Somos, *Secularisation*, ch. V. For Harrington, see Somos, 'Irenic Secularization and the Hebrew Republic in Harrington's *Oceana*', in *European Contexts for English Republicanism* (eds. G. Mahlberg and D. Wiemann; Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 81–103.

Like Grotius, Selden actively subverted the biblical foundations of established legal discourse. This leitmotif runs from at least *The Historie of Tithes* (1618) to *De iure naturali* (1640). It is also a major factor in *Mare clausum*'s influential legal support for the maritime component in British sovereignty and imperialism.

Hobbes' unum necessarium

Selden was one of the few thinkers Hobbes admired.³⁴ A systematic textual study of their reciprocal influence remains a *desideratum*. My more limited objective here is to offer a single case study illustrating the conspicuous and consistent idiosyncrasy of Hobbes' biblical interpretations in *Leviathan*, and its integral relevance to Hobbes' political project.³⁵ It concerns Hobbes' famous *unum necessarium* thesis: that the only article of faith required for salvation is that Jesus is the Christ.

Chapter 43 of *Leviathan* ('Of what is NECESSARY for a Man's Reception into the Kingdom of Heaven') contains a long discussion of *unum necessarium*.³⁶ Part of the context for this discussion is the voluminous and intricate early modern debate about essential and non-essential tenets, and the significance of the distinction.³⁷ Grotius, Hobbes and Locke were among those who took the minimalist project to its logical conclusion, deconstructing the claims for the necessity of every Christian doctrine except that Jesus is the Saviour.³⁸ All who believed this were Christians, with a right to critically examine other doctrines. Grotius, Hobbes and Locke all offered extensive biblical support for the argument that beliefs

³⁴ Viz., e.g., T. Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651), p. 46 and Hobbes' 6/16 April 1636 letter to Glen, in T. Hobbes, *Correspondence* (ed. Noel Malcolm, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), I.30. For Hobbes and Selden see Tuck, *Natural*.

³⁵ While to my knowledge this has never been done, the literature on Hobbes' biblical criticism is too large even to survey here. On the technicality of tracing his biblical sources, see H. W. Jones, 'Thomas Hobbes and the Bible: A Preliminary Enquiry', in *Arts du Spectacle et histoire des idées. Recueil offert en hommage à Jean Jacquot* (ed. J. M. Vaccaro; Tours: CNRS, 1984), pp. 271–85.

³⁶ *Leviathan*, pp. 324–30. This section is extensively rewritten in the Latin *Leviathan*.

³⁷ For one treatment of Christian minimalism and adiaphorism see Somos, *Secularisation*, pp. 287–319, and the references there. The relationship between minimalism, ecumenism, adiaphorism, Nicodemism and Christian Stoicism awaits further study.

³⁸ Somos, 'Beyond Minimalism: Didactic Secularisation in *De Veritate*', in *The True Faith? A Cosmopolitan Project in the Early Enlightenment* (ed. H. W. Blom; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming.)

other than the messianic status of the historical Jesus are non-essential, setting up the claim that institutional ceremonies and the individual liberty to perform external actions pursuant to heterodox beliefs are subject to the magistrate's approval. Conscience could not be forced, but the magistrate could justly regulate public forms of worship. This extreme dogmatic minimalism complements the position on church-state relations normally called Erastian, but it does not lead automatically to modern ideas of tolerance.³⁹

This is because the single remaining article of faith is a complicated one. Even extreme minimalists could and did portray Catholics, Jews, Socinians, atheists and nonconformists as denying Jesus' redemptive power, and therefore untrustworthy in worldly matters that require adherence to an ethical code—such as keeping promises—that is derived from the fear of eternal death and the promise of salvation. They also could—and did—accuse others of challenging the sufficiency of *unum necessarium*, thereby undermining social order and appropriating the sovereign's right to regulate external behaviour. Catholics remained subject to the charge that they followed the Pope, whose secular powers were as extensive as a Sovereign's; therefore they were citizens of the Roman Catholic state, not England.

Notwithstanding such limits of the legal and political effect of doctrinal minimalism, the seventeenth-century minimalist stance was calculated to effectively contain and prevent conflicts that were motivated or excused by religious arguments. Hobbes' formulation of the *unum necessarium* is a major contribution.

First Argument: Reductio ad absurdum

First, Hobbes explains that 'Christ' means the promised future king of an actual commonwealth. He then breaks down his argument into numbered parts. The first relies on the Gospels, including descriptions of the life of Jesus. Hobbes argues that the essence of all the Gospels is the *unum necessarium*, nothing more: 'the Scope of all the Evangelists (as may appear by reading them) was the same. Therefore the Scope of the whole Gospel,

³⁹ H. Blom, 'Foreign Gods and Political Order: Locke, Spinoza and the Limits of a Tolérant Society', in *La centralità del dubbio* (ed. C. Hermanin and L. Simonutti; Florence: Olschki, 2010), pp. 973–98; A. Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age: The Political Thought of Johan & Pieter de la Court* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 307–44.

was the establishing of the onely Article.⁴⁰ To show this, Hobbes first purports to summarise Matthew's gospel. His summary leaves out the Sermon on the Mount, the parables in chapters 13, 15, 16, 20, 25, etc., all the teachings of Jesus, Judas' betrayal, Pilate and the trial, and Jesus' resurrection. Instead, the list he claims is exhaustive contains only scenes that support his point (and not even all of those). The differences between the canonical gospels have always been a matter of intense debate, including the gaps between the historical accounts of Jesus' life in the synoptic gospels and John. Hobbes addresses none of this, even though he mentions John in this part of his argument: 'And St. John expressly makes it his conclusion, *John 20:31. These things are written, that you may know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*'.⁴¹ This is not, in fact, the conclusion to John: there is another whole chapter. In addition, Hobbes truncates the penultimate verse of the chapter he does cite, which ends with the phrase, 'and that believing ye might have life through his name'. This first argument from the gospels as historical evidence already contains conspicuous idiosyncrasies.

Second Argument: First String: Luke 9:2—Matt 10:7—Acts 17:6—Acts 17:2–3

Hobbes claims that his second argument is based on sermons made by the apostles, both before and after the ascension. In fact, he cites passages describing Jesus' commission to the apostles, before the ascension. One plausible reading of this inconsistency is that Hobbes is implicitly questioning the apostles' veracity regarding the source of their own authority. This is corroborated by the fact that in chapter 42 he uses Matt 10:7 and the identical argumentative structure, from *unum necessarium* to the apostles' mandate, to refute Bellarmine, papal infallibility and all popes, bishops, monks and clerics who claim to have temporal powers.⁴² The string of biblical references in chapter 43 to support the *unum necessarium* follows the same structure and uses many of the same references, but applies them to the apostles:

The Apostles in our Saviours time were sent, *Luke 9.2.* to Preach the Kingdome of God: For neither there, nor *Mat. 10.7.* giveth he any Commission

⁴⁰ *Leviathan*, p. 325.

⁴¹ *Leviathan*, p. 325.

⁴² *Leviathan*, pp. 300–20.

to them, other than this, *As ye go, Preach, saying, the Kingdome of Heaven is at hand*; that is, that Jesus is the *Messiah*, the *Christ*, the *King* which was to come. That their Preaching also after his ascension was the same, is manifest out of *Acts 17.6*.⁴³

The first notable thing about this string of biblical references is that, according to Luke 9:2 and Matt 10:7, Jesus gave several commissions in addition to preaching, namely to heal the sick, cast out devils and, in Matthew, to raise the dead. The apostles received both the power (Matt 10:1) and Jesus' commission (Matt 10:7) and did indeed perform all these. Although it would have been sufficient support for *unum necessarium* to say that Jesus instructed the apostles to preach that he was the messiah, Hobbes instead emphatically makes the—blatantly erroneous—point about this commission being the only one. Even if he wanted to minimise the powers that priests could claim through apostolic succession, he did not need to deny them the added commissions of healing and exorcism, especially after he showed these two to be identical.⁴⁴ He could have argued that it was the church's duty to care for the sick, as long as it did not infringe upon the Sovereign's authority.

Hobbes' use of Acts 17:2–3 and Acts 17:6–7 is also peculiar. In Thessaloniki, Paul preached the divinely ordered necessity of Jesus' suffering, his resurrection, and his divinity. Paul's Jewish opponents distorted his words and accused him of inciting rebellion against Rome in favour of a new king. Hobbes reverses the textual order in *Leviathan*, citing the distorted report (Acts 17:6–7) before the real sermon (Acts 17:2–3), and treats both as equivalent proofs of *unum necessarium*. However, neither passage supports his argument. As Hobbes points out elsewhere, the divine plan was not to make Jesus king at his first coming, but to obtain satisfaction for man's sins through the crucifixion. The accusation of Paul's opponents was unfounded. Paul taught several things in addition to Jesus being the messiah, including precepts for the internal and external behaviour of congregations. The contradiction between Hobbes' agreement with Paul's critics (according to whom Paul fomented political rebellion) and Hobbes' citation of Acts 17 in support of *unum necessarium*, disappears only if being the new, actually reigning king and being the redeemer are not overlapping

⁴³ *Leviathan*, p. 325.

⁴⁴ E.g. *Leviathan*, pp. 36–39: when men did not know the natural cause of an illness, they explained it with devils.

but identical conditions. This is possible if Hobbes was a millenarian, or if he agreed with Paul's critics, and/or if he historicised Paul's sermons as referring to an imminent second coming and found Paul to be wrong about it.⁴⁵ Another possibility is that Hobbes again chose not only inappropriate, but *obviously* unsuitable verses to prove his point.

Third Argument: Second String: Luke 23:39–43—Matt 11:30—Matt 18:6—1 Cor 1:21

Hobbes' third argument for *unum necessarium* is

from those places of Scripture, by which all the Faith required to Salvation is declared to be Easie. For if an inward assent of the mind to all the Doctrines concerning Christian Faith now taught, (whereof the greatest part are disputed), were necessary to Salvation, there would be nothing in the world so hard, as to be a Christian.⁴⁶

Minimalism was often complemented by the argument from simplicity, according to which the parts of the Bible that God wanted everyone to understand are so clear that there is no debate about them and that the rest is not essential. The general direction of this discourse was the opposite of a long medieval process of theological refinement, and often provoked accusations of Arianism, Pelagianism, Socinianism, or even atheism.

Hobbes' string for this, the third argument, is Luke 23:39–43, Matt 11:30; 18:6 and 1 Cor 1:21. Although he does not explicitly mention Luke, he argues that the only reason why the thief upon the cross was saved was that he testified to Jesus being king. In support, Hobbes cites a part of Luke 23:42 *verbatim*, but without giving the reference. Hobbes' citation of Luke's report of the thief's words runs, '*Lord remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdome*'; by which he testified no beleefe of any other Article, but this, That *Jesus was the King*.⁴⁷ The first thing to note is that the thief's statement supports the proposition that Jesus will be king, not that he already is. Secondly, the other source for this story is Matt 27:44. Contrary to Luke, it describes both thieves reviling Jesus. This was a well-

⁴⁵ Grotius explicitly argues the latter in *De veritate religionis Christianae* (2nd ed., Leiden: Joannes Maire, 1629), pp. 55–61.

⁴⁶ *Leviathan*, p. 325.

⁴⁷ *Leviathan*, p. 326.

known and oft-cited instance of evangelical inconsistency. Hobbes leaves it unmentioned and unresolved, despite the fact that all Bibles have the cross-reference to the contradictory passages, and despite Hobbes' familiarity with the Gospel of Matthew, which he cites often in *Leviathan*, and twice as often in the third argument as the other books of the Bible combined. Luke 23:42 is another conspicuously inappropriate passage to support the *unum necessarium*.

Hobbes quotes Matt 11:30 as 'Christs yoke is Easy, and his burthen Light,' though the original is direct speech in the first person. Matt 18:6 is an odd reference: since little children believe in Christ, Hobbes argues, it must be easy to do. Matthew 18 is a long sermon by Jesus about the need to be humble, forgiving, and not hurt or despise children. Although in Matt 18:6 Jesus does say that children believe in him, the verse itself is a severe threat against those who would offend 'one of these little ones.' Moreover, nowhere does Jesus say that belief is in any way easy; in fact, the overall impression is one of a continuous struggle aimed at undoing the world in oneself. It certainly does not support Hobbes' point.

The often-used 'foolishness of preaching' in 1 Cor 1:21 also stands out as an odd passage to choose to prove *unum necessarium*, especially the ease of believing it. The passage is against worldly philosophy, including its commonsensical and readily believable components. The Geneva Bible, on which Hobbes draws more than the Authorised Version (henceforth AV), gives long glosses to 1 Cor 1:21, which exemplify the early modern English concern with this passage. Despite Hobbes' sophisticated engagement with contemporary exegetical debates elsewhere, here he uses without comment this highly debated biblical verse to prove easiness of belief—perhaps ironically. Hobbes' final point in support of this argument is that Paul, who 'never perhaps thought of Transubstantiation, nor Purgatory, nor many other Articles now obtruded,' was still saved. It is worth noting, however, that it was physical signs that convinced Paul: the great light, the voice, and being thrown from his horse. God did not tell him anything about the second coming or Jesus being the king (Acts 9). There is no cross-reference between the passages cited in Hobbes' third argument in Tyndale, the Geneva or the AV. The Vulgate refers from 1 Cor 1:21 to Matt 11:25, and also from Matt 18:6 to Acts 9:5. If Hobbes' edition had the same, then it is likely that he also had Paul's conversion in mind when he wrote that Paul did not believe in transubstantiation. Neither, however, was Paul converted by *unum necessarium*, let alone the easiness of believing it, which is what Hobbes set out to prove.

*Fourth Argument: Third String: John 5:39—John 11:26–7—John 20:31—
1 John 4:2—1 John 5:1—1 John 5:5—Acts 8:36–37*

The fourth argument for *unum necessarium* builds on biblical passages that allow for 'no controversie of Interpretation.'⁴⁸ His references are John 5:39; 11:26–7; 20:31; 1 John 4:2; 5:1; 5:5; Acts 8:36–37 as well as 'Thy faith hath saved thee,' which only occurs in Luke 7:50 and 18:42, although the phrase, 'thy faith hath made thee whole,' also appears several times (Matt 9:22; Mark 5:34; 10:52; Luke 8:48; 17:19). The Geneva Bible has no cross-references between any of the verses that Hobbes purports to cite. The AV only has Luke 7:50 to 18:42. The Vulgate has most of them, except for cross-references between any of the first seven verses in this string and 'Thy faith hath saved thee' in Luke.

This connection between Luke and the first seven biblical references in Hobbes' argument for *unum necessarium* is another instance of the influence that the Geneva glosses had on *Leviathan*, this time on proving *unum necessarium* with an argument from simplicity. Gloss k to John 20:29 explains the verse as: 'Which depend upon the simplicitie of Gods worde, & grounde not the selves upon mans sense and reason,' while gloss b to 1 John 4:2 on Jesus reads: 'Who being very God came from his Father and toke upon him our flesh. He that confesseth or preacheth this truely, hathe the Spirit of God, els not.'

Once again we find Hobbes choosing verses that are ambiguous at best, and often strikingly inappropriate, in ways that make the reader question the Bible's authority and applicability to the political issues raised in *Leviathan*. John 5:39 is a part of Jesus' speech against those who do not believe in him. It takes the form of a legal argument that must have appealed to Hobbes. A man's testimony about himself should be disregarded, Jesus begins, but his own messiahship is attested by John, God the Father, and by scriptures. Those who doubt that Jesus is the Son of God also reject these witnesses. This is the context in which scripture is mentioned: as one of the authorities ignored by all those who did not accept Jesus as the Christ. Hobbes uses this passage to argue that since Jesus was referring to the Old Testament (the New not having been written yet), and Jesus reduced the Old Testament to the 'marks' and prophecies of Christ, therefore the only substantive message of the whole Bible is the *unum necessarium*. At the least, this is a radical interpretation of Jesus' words.

⁴⁸ *Leviathan*, p. 326.

John 11:26–27 comes from the resurrection of Lazarus. Martha's response to Jesus' question about her belief concerns eternal life; it says nothing about kingship. Throughout the fourth argument Hobbes repeatedly cites passages like this, which describe Jesus as the saviour, to show that he is king; yet the two are not necessarily synonymous. Likewise, John 20:31 is the closing formula of the 'doubting Thomas' scene. It states that there were more signs that Jesus was the Christ, but these are not described. The signs that remain unwritten are meant to make people believe and to have eternal life through their faith. Again, this is an odd passage to bear any weight in Hobbes' argument for *unum necessarium*, partly because Hobbes does not describe here what these signs might be (if they are miracles, for instance, according to Hobbes' arguments elsewhere, these ceased after Christ) and partly because Thomas' demand for tangible evidence is a striking reminder that even apostles are not always ready to take *unum necessarium* on faith alone.

The next biblical passage supporting the fourth argument is 1 John 4:2, a doctrinal exposition warning against false prophets, addressed to all believers. Acts 8:36–7 is about a eunuch who was reading Isaiah when he met Philip, who explained the Old Testament passage as a prophecy about Christ. The eunuch then wished to be baptised, so Philip summarised the faith. This seems like a straightforward and excellent choice for Hobbes to substantiate *unum necessarium* from the Bible. However, he irreparably obfuscates the matter by dividing the fourth argument for *unum necessarium* into five groups. The first group begins with John 5:39 about the marks of Jesus and the Old Testament, while the eunuch scene from Acts 8:36–7, which is in the last, fifth group is supposed to show that

Therefore this Article beleaved, *Jesus is the Christ*, is sufficient to Baptisme, that is to say, to our Reception into the Kingdome of God, and by consequence, onely Necessary. And generally in all places where our Saviour saith to any man, *Thy faith hath saved thee*, the cause he saith it, is some Confession, which directly, or by consequence, implyeth a beleef, that *Jesus is the Christ*.⁴⁹

This conforms to Hobbes' definition and view of baptism as the sign of a pact with God and a promise to obey Christ when he establishes his kingdom, a view developed at length at the end of *Leviathan*, chapter 35, and in chapters 41 and 42. Although Hobbes discusses prophecy at length elsewhere, he does not bring in his own views here, even though the Acts

⁴⁹ *Leviathan*, pp. 326–27.

passage clearly requires it. Not that his view of baptism was straightforward: it could be a sign of the elect, but in chapter 41 Hobbes historicises it, and presents it as a ritual established by Jews at a time of leprosy, or derived from the Greek practice of washing the dead. Still, for Hobbes it was one of the two deeply meaningful sacraments (the other is the Lord's Supper), all other rites being even more incidental and historically contingent.

Regarding the second sentence in the last passage, Jesus invariably uses the 'Thy faith hath saved thee' and the 'Thy faith hath made thee whole' formulae when dismissing someone he just healed: never when he says that someone will enter Heaven or gain salvation. In sum, these passages have little of the meaning that Hobbes ascribes to them.

*Fifth Argument: Fourth String: Matt 24:23—Gal 1:8—1 John 4:1—
Matt 16:18—1 Cor 3:11–12—Zech 13:8–9—2 Pet 3:7, 10, 12*

The fifth and final argument for *unum necessarium* is no less surprising. This argument is 'from the places, where this Article is made the Foundation of Faith': Matt 24:23; Gal 1:8; 1 John 4:1; Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:11–12; Zech 13:8–9; 2 Pet 3:7, 10, 12. This string may have come from the Vulgate, since almost none of the cross-references are in the AV or the Geneva Bible.

The context of Matt 24:23 reveals the typical Hobbesian interpretative strategy.

The last argument is from the places, where this Article is made the Foundation of Faith: For he that holdeth the Foundation shall bee saved. Which places are first, *Mat. 24. 23. If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, beleeve it not, for there shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets, and shall shew great signes and wonders, & c.* Here wee see, this Article *Jesus is the Christ*, must bee held, though hee that shall teach the contrary should doe great miracles.⁵⁰

The Matthean context is the end of the world and the destruction of the Temple. The whole chapter is dire and foreboding in tone, unfit to prove and flesh out a positive doctrine. Furthermore, Hobbes refers to the same verse and the same link (Matt 24:24 and Gal 1:8) in chapter 32 to show that miracles prove little, since even false prophets can produce them and 'deceive the very elect.'⁵¹ He also brings in the more ominous nearby verses (Matt 24:5, 15) to discuss the Antichrist and the end of the

⁵⁰ *Leviathan*, p. 327.

⁵¹ *Leviathan*, p. 197.

world in chapter 42.⁵² What connects Matt 24:5; 25:11; 25:24 and 1 John 4:1 is the motif of false prophets. This is in the Vulgate, but not in the AV: Matt 24:5 cross-refers to 24:11 and 24:24, while Matt 24:11 refers to the other two Matthew 24 verses as well as to 1 John 4:1. Since Hobbes adapted this string either from another book or his own notes on false prophets and the end of the world, it is odd to find him recycle it to support *unum necessarium*.

The reference to Gal 1:8 is not in Geneva or the AV, but the Vulgate 1 Cor 3:10 does refer to Gal 1:7–9. It is another incongruous passage, and its use for *unum necessarium* is conspicuously far-fetched and forced. Galatians 1 is an admonishment; Paul is berating the Galatians for falling from the true faith. To put an end to disagreements within the church, he instructs the Galatians that even if an angel preached something different from what they heard from the apostles, they should still ignore it. He does *not* say that *unum necessarium* should be the foundation of their faith.

As with other passages he cites, Hobbes again appears to be more concerned with defeating false prophets and those who claim doctrinal authority than with supporting *unum necessarium*. Earlier we saw the uneasy adaptation of Hobbes' powerful anti-clerical and anti-papal biblical exegeses, developed in previous *Leviathan* chapters, to his definition (and severe limitation) of the apostles' mandate in chapter 43, as part of his second *unum necessarium* argument. Just as the redeployment of earlier anti-clerical and anti-papal interpretations led to Hobbes detracting from the apostles' power (including the reduction of Jesus' commissions), here the exegetical barriers he erects against false prophets severely hamper his ability to construct a positive theological argument to support *unum necessarium*.

Matthew 16:18–19, unlike the other references, is actually directly relevant to what Hobbes set out to demonstrate. This is, as he knew, one of the most debated passages in the Bible; Catholics used 'That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church' to support the Pope's legitimacy. Hobbes argues instead that the 'rock' refers to the *unum necessarium* professed by Peter in Matt 16:16. He makes the exact same point in his response to the third argument of Bellarmine's first book, where he invokes five other biblical passages to prove precisely that *unum necessarium* is the only proper and required foundation of faith.⁵³ Strangely,

⁵² *Leviathan*, p. 303.

⁵³ *Leviathan*, pp. 301–302.

Hobbes' exposition of these passages is significantly more detailed and convincing when he levels them against Bellarmine's justification of papal authority than here, where his stated aim is to prove *unum necessarium*. Again, the anti-clerical component of *Leviathan* not only far outweighs the constructive theology, but does so in contradiction to Hobbes' stated priorities.

There is a similarly multi-layered and contentious exegetical tradition for 1 Cor 3:11–12. Hobbes' reading is *prima facie* credible: those who believe in *unum necessarium* will be saved, irrespective of their position on *adiaphora*. However, he next conjectures that the fire, which burns down every man's house and reveals the durability of the materials used to build on the solid foundation, which is the *unum necessarium*, is deeply allegorical. The passage in 1 Corinthians refers not to purgatory, but relies on Zech 13:8–9. This is an ingenious but problematic interpretation. Hobbes cites Zechariah as:

Two parts therein shall be cut off, and die, but the third shall be left therein; And I will bring the third part through the Fire, and will refine them as Silver is refined, and will try them as Gold is tryed; they shall call on the name of the Lord, and I will hear them.⁵⁴

But this is not the end of the passage. It continues (following the AV): 'they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It *is* my people; and they shall say, the LORD *is* my God.' Moreover, verses 8 and 9 are at the end of Zechariah 13, in the context of verse 7, where God prophesies that he will smite the shepherd who looks after his sheep unfaithfully.

The AV reads Zech 13:7–9 as a prefiguration and prophecy of the crucifixion and the new covenant through Christ. Geneva offers a different interpretation. Its glosses to verses 4 and 5 say that false prophets will have to work for their living, no longer able to claim church tithes. The trial in verse 8, according to the Geneva gloss, refers to the chosen, who will endure suffering before ascending to heaven. Hobbes' reading, as in all other cases, is closer to the Geneva Bible than to the AV, and adds a millenarian twist: 'The day of Judgment, is the day of the Restauration of the Kingdome of God.' According to Hobbes, this is what 1 Cor 1:21, Zech 13:9, and 2 Peter all refer to. Unusually, this reading is both consistent with the biblical text and relevant to Hobbes' alleged *demonstrandum*. The questions are where he got the reference from, why he omitted the final

⁵⁴ *Leviathan*, p. 328.

phrase of Zechariah, and what he meant by choosing a verse preceded by the image of God smiting and scattering his own shepherds. On balance, it seems highly probable that in this case, as in the cases treated above, Hobbes is trying to use an anti-papal and anti-clerical (and possibly millenarian) treatise's biblical strings to construct a dubious doctrine of *unum necessarium*. The final references to prove *unum necessarium* are 2 Pet 3:7, 10, and 12. They too describe the day of judgment rather than *unum necessarium*. In conjunction with Zechariah, they offer a clue to Hobbes' source for this string. Besides the anti-papal genre, another possibility is a work on purgatory, since here Hobbes again rejects the view that either 2 Peter or the foregoing verses prove its existence.

Comprehensive analysis of *Leviathan* reveals that most of its hundreds of biblical interpretations are also conspicuously untenable and were recognised as such by Hobbes' contemporaries.⁵⁵ One possible explanation is that Hobbes' reinterpretations are genuine, albeit eclectic. Another is that the consistent instrumentality and idiosyncrasy of Hobbes' biblical exegesis is a *bravura* demonstration that the Bible, like all texts, is open to irreducibly multiple interpretations, and therefore should be inadmissible as evidence in political legitimacy claims.⁵⁶ Explicit parts of *Leviathan* make this same point, including the *unum necessarium* argument, Hobbes' repeated affirmation of the individual's freedom of conscience, and the comprehensive assault on clerical authority.⁵⁷ It does complicate matters, however, if the explicit arguments are supported by obviously (but not explicitly) fallacious biblical interpretation.

That, however, is another story. The goal here was to show that Hobbes, like Selden, systematically subverted the biblical politics which were a cause, and/or the result, but certainly an integral part of the violence and instability that these thinkers aimed to contain. Moreover, the case of Hobbes' *unum necessarium*—ostensibly in the same genre as irenic and missionary minimalism—shows how hard it is to find conceptual space in *Leviathan* for Christian evangelism, let alone a state and an empire based on positive Christianity. James Harrington was one of Selden's many

⁵⁵ Again, it is impracticable to try to survey the recent literature on the contemporary reception of Hobbes' biblical exegesis. Two starting points are J. Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan: The Reception of the Political and Religious Ideas of Thomas Hobbes in England, 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and J. Champion, 'Hobbes and Biblical Criticism: Some Preliminary Remarks', *Bulletin Annuel Institut d'Histoire de la Ref-ormation* 31 (2010), pp. 53–72.

⁵⁶ For the same method in Grocius see Somos, *Secularisation*, chapter V.

⁵⁷ E.g. *Leviathan*, pp. 384–86.

and Hobbes' few overt admirers in the 1650s. Proposing sometimes similar, sometimes different institutional arrangements, but sharing the same ambition to construct an irenicist framework for English, British and colonial politics and law, Harrington's exegetical techniques for the neutralisation of the Bible constitute the next chapter in what increasingly seems like a coherent history of seventeenth-century English secularisation, yet to be written. While texts like *Mare clausum*, *Leviathan* and *Oceana* are rightly placed in the context of particular political controversies, they also address chronic problems of religious politics, and deliberately build on one another to do so.

*Harrington: Popular Sovereignty, Church and State,
Satire and Empire*

Oceana is a political work, and the causes and meaning of Harrington's highly idiosyncratic biblical exegeses are relatively easy to understand. Firstly, his times provided ample evidence that conflicts cannot be settled by ignoring religious sensibilities and suddenly eliminating religious elements from legal and political arguments. To be an effective aid in negotiating, pacifying and uniting opposing sides, secularisation had to be subtle and incremental.⁵⁸ Radically secular arguments could be rejected easily as ill-founded or irrelevant. Secondly, groups and individuals who tried to resolve religious conflicts through precipitate secularisation, including French New Historians and the Leiden Circle, suffered oppression. Harrington's best hope of being taken seriously was to figure out a way to minimise the number and kinds of believers who would be upset by *Oceana*, while at the same time proposing a credible Erastian arrangement for institutionalising some form of toleration, including the liberty of conscience and constraints on enthusiasm. One of his best instruments for accomplishing this was the systematic and conspicuous subversion of the Bible in political discourse. This section focuses on biblical criticism integral to Harrington's theses on popular sovereignty, church-state relations, and imperialism.

⁵⁸ For detailed support of this statement see Somos, 'Irenic'.

Popular Sovereignty

In the sixth order of *Oceana*, Harrington criticises English translations of Acts 14:23 and Rom 10:17.⁵⁹ *A propos* the first passage, Harrington argues that the people and not the apostles have the right to elect their pastors and elders. In the case of Rom 10:17, which he cites in part as '*Faith cometh by hearing*,' Harrington's point is that despite Paul's obvious meaning, namely that preaching is important and can save both Gentiles and Jews, the verse makes better sense as a warning that preaching is powerful; therefore it must be controlled by the civil magistrate who can allow the clergy to research, formulate and preach the word of God in the framework of a national religion. Pocock notes that Harrington's Erastian reinterpretation of Romans comes from chapter 43 of *Leviathan*, but misses that Harrington takes his particular reading of Acts 14:23 entirely and directly from chapter 42.⁶⁰

Like Acts 14:23, the next idiosyncratic Harringtonian exegesis also concerns popular sovereignty:

the purity of the Suffrage in a popular Government is the health, if not the life of it; seeing the Soul is no otherwise breathed into the Sovereign Power, then by the Suffrage of the People. Wherefore no wonder if Postellus be of opinion, that this use of the Ball is the very same with that which was of the Bean in Athens; or, that others, by the Text concerning Eldad and Medad, derive it from the Common-wealth of Israel.⁶¹

Eldad and Medad remained in the camp and prophesied, while God gave the spirit of prophecy to the seventy elders who left the camp with Moses.

⁵⁹ *The Common-Wealth of Oceana* (London, 1656), pp. 64–65.

⁶⁰ J. Harrington, *Political Works* (ed. J. G. A. Pocock; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Part One, p. 217 n. 2. Note, however, that while Hobbes thinks that learning by hearing is the natural way, in Harrington's reflection on Hobbes here the 'naturall way' to understand Scripture, i.e. through reason, is impossible. Although Pocock is right to show that their Erastian conclusions are identical, Harrington considers the process whereby specialists in ancient history, languages and theology first decipher Scripture, then the civil magistrate authorises its teaching and preaching, to be artificial. The paragraph that follows Harrington's development of Romans, beginning with 'The *Common-wealth* having thus performed ...' is remarkable for presenting the process as artificial reason, and showing that even this is limited by epistemic boundaries. Since 'a *Common-wealth* is not to presume upon that which is supernaturall,' and even artificial reason is inadequate, Harrington seems skeptical of the extent to which the real meaning of Scripture can be recovered. Instead of dwelling on Scripture's knowability, when his central concern (political stability) is sufficiently addressed by the institutional arrangements that guarantee the magistracy's control over religious doctrine, preaching and education, Harrington moves on to discussing the parish system.

⁶¹ *Oceana*, p. 120.

A young man ran to Moses to report and demand that Moses reproach those two. Moses berated him for envy and wished that all Israelites were prophets, with God's spirit upon them (Num 11:24–29). Hobbes used this passage twice in *Leviathan*, chapter 36: firstly, to show that the seventy prophets were subordinate to Moses and that the spirit of God meant assisting Moses in government and, secondly, to argue that one should come to the Sovereign to establish whether prophecies are true or not. Hobbes repeats the former point in chapter 40, strongly emphasising that the spirit of God that came upon the seventy elders signifies not an autonomous gift of prophecy, but the mental recognition of their duty to obey Moses. Lord Archon, Harrington's thinly disguised Cromwell, uses this passage to elaborate the way in which suffrage is the right expression of popular sovereignty, which is the true soul of the republic. His interpretation of Eldad and Medad suggests that these two gained their prophetic powers from the people, in contradistinction from Moses and the seventy.

This reading contradicts Harrington's description of the seventy elders as first elected by the people, and later usurping authority by ordaining their successors by imposition of hands instead of popular election. According to Harrington, this marked the shift from a popular to an aristocratic republic. It was this corrupt practice that was introduced into the Christian church by the apostles, even though they tried to signal their preference for popular election and the authorisation of elders by holding up hands, instead of imposing them.⁶² A possible though unlikely resolution is that 'by the Text concerning Eldad and Medad' Harrington meant the pertinent biblical section in general, and chose to refer to it by the two independent prophets rather than invoke Moses and the seventy.⁶³

⁶² J. Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (London: John Streater, 1656), pp. 149–50; J. Harrington, *The Prerogative of Popular Government* (London: Thomas Brewster, 1658), II.iii and iv throughout, including several allegations that Jewish Talmudists and Christian divines systematically abused God's Word to prove their superiority to, and independence from, political and popular control by misappropriating ordination, washing, anointment, and by unjustly deriving legitimacy from Aaron, Joshua, and the Sanhedrin, over millennia of systematic self-aggrandisement. Cf. L. Cary, 'The Lord of Faulklands Reply', in *Sir Lucius Cary, Late Lord Viscount of Falkland, His Discourse on Infallibility with an Answer to it: And His Lordships Reply, Never Before Published* (London: John Hardesty, 1651), pp. 173–74.

⁶³ *Prerogative*, II.iii.27–31 handles the same passages and situation more coherently: the 12 territorial tribes (i.e. not the Levites) chose 6 men each. Their names were put into an urn. 70 slips marked 'Presbyter' and two blank slips were placed in another urn. Drawing lots after prayer established the 70 elders and the two who remained; in this case, Eldad and Medad. The more incoherent account in *Oceana* suggests that Harrington may have worked this out in response to criticism in M. Wren, *Considerations on Mr. Harrington's*

Without claiming that Harrington fully thought through his reference to Num 11 in *Oceana*, one can speculate that he included it (and perhaps these two prophets in particular) in opposition to Hobbes' pro-Sovereign interpretation or, perhaps, the 'others' he mentions in the passage cited did exist and he was tapping into an existing, and at the time well known, usage of Eldad and Medad as symbols of voting and popular sovereignty. In any case, it is a conspicuously inappropriate passage to cite in support of popular sovereignty, and of suffrage in particular, and it is a notable instance of Harrington's political instrumentalisation of the Bible.⁶⁴

The same applies to Eccl 1:4 and Prov 31:14–23. Harrington stretches both spectacularly. First, he reasserts that, rightly arranged, Oceana's government can be immortal, 'seeing one Generation cometh, & another goeth, but the Earth remaineth firme for ever.'⁶⁵ Harrington's use inverts the original meaning, where mortality is invoked to show that pride in man's work is vanity of vanities. Individuals die; generations die. In contrast with human achievements, the sun, winds, rivers and seas move along seemingly eternal circles, and man's comprehension and senses are too poor to grasp even nature. Harrington cites the passage to support the opposite, namely, that Oceana can be immortal, partly because the succession of human generations is in principle never-ending, and partly because its constitution can be arranged in mechanical perfection.

The Senate the People and the Magistracy, or the Parliament so Constituted (as you have seen) is the Guardian of this Commonwealth, and the Husband of such a Wife as is elegantly described by Solomon. *Shee is like the Merchants Ship, Shee bringeth her food from farre. She considereth a Field and buyeth it: With the fruit of her hands She Planteth a Vineyard: Shee conceived that her Merchandize is good: She stretcheth forth her hands to the poor: Shee is not afraid of the Snow for her Houshold, for all her houshold are clothed with Scarlet: Shee maketh herself Coverings of her Tapestry; Her cloathing is Silke and Purple; Her Husband is known (by his Robes) in the Gates, when he sitteth amongst the Senators of the Land.*⁶⁶

Common-wealth of Oceana: Restrained to the First Part of the Preliminaries (London: Samuel Gallibrand, 1657). Also see *Prerogative*, II.iv.40.

⁶⁴ For instance, Milton's quasi-millenarian argument for popular sovereignty, based on the same passage, omits Eldad and Medad, and refers only to the time when all people become prophets (J. Milton, *Areopagitica: A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing to the Parliament of England* [London: n.p., 1644], p. 32).

⁶⁵ *Oceana*, p. 190. AV has 'the earth abideth'. Pocock gives the sources as Eccl 1:3 of the AV (Harrington, *Works*, p. 287).

⁶⁶ *Oceana*, p. 191.

Unlike with Eccl 1:4 this source is given on the margin, as Proverbs 31. It is in fact a selective quotation, consisting of Prov 31:14, 16, part of 18, part of 20, and all of 21–23. Of the omitted verses, 15 and 19 are probably insignificant. (Prov 31:19 describes the wife's spinning, which could have been omitted deliberately, if Harrington intended to de-emphasise a traditional and major English industry. However, he cites the later passages on tapestry and clothing in full.) By contrast, Harrington's omission of Prov 31:17 is interesting: 'She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengthened her arms.' Recall that this is the twenty-fourth order of *Oceana*, which deals with England's future policies in Scotland and Ireland, and the omission is from the characterisation of the people (the wife), under the guidance and protection of Parliament (the husband). Harrington proposes that if Scotland and Ireland adopted rotation and other ideal arrangements, they should be allowed to send deputies to both houses in Westminster. Given contemporary events and controversies, including the schemes for resettling Scotland and/or Ireland with New Model Army soldiers, it would exceed Harrington's Machiavellism to emphasise arming the people when they are being distinguished—even conjugally—from their republican government.⁶⁷ This may be the reason for his omission of the evocative, militant Prov 31:17.

Beyond omissions of partial and whole verses, Harrington also changes phrasing. Prov 31:18's Vulgate *gustavit*, rendered as 'perceiveth' in AV and some other English versions (including the 1568 Bishop's Bible), is changed by Harrington to 'conceived.' The Geneva translations give 'She feeleth that her marchandise is good.' The Douay-Rheims, similarly to Wycliffe's 1395 translation, has 'She hath tasted and seen that her traffic is good.' Harrington's version seems new; he inserts 'her [tapestry]' into Prov 31:22. Both these seem insignificant compared to 31:23 where, as Pocock notes, Harrington adds 'by his Robes' to the AV. He also changes 'elders' to 'senators,' reversing a trend: the Vulgate's *cum senatoribus terrae* was translated as 'senatours of erthe' by Wycliffe and 'the senators of the land' in Douay-Rheims, but as 'the Elders of the land' in the Geneva Bible. *Oceana's* government is the husband; the people are the wife, recalling

⁶⁷ Pocock, 'Introduction', in Harrington, *Works*, pp. 36–37; S. B. Liljegren, 'Harrington and the Jews', *Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundets I Lund* (1931–2), pp. 65–92; J. Smyth, 'Empire-Building: The English Republic, Scotland and Ireland', in *Varieties of Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism in Context* (ed. A. Hessayon and D. Finnegan; Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 129–44.

Christ and the Church: Harrington's choice of 'senators' instead of 'elders' fits his scheme perfectly.

Church-State Relations: Education, Scripture, Erastianism

A more striking instance occurs in Lord Archon's disquisition on education, scriptural authority, and church government. Universities can best supply Oceana's need for training and research in ancient prudence and religion. Hebrew and Greek are required, but it takes a lifetime to acquire the proficiency needed for biblical exegesis. In addition, thorough historical knowledge is indispensable for contextualising scripture properly.

Again, this is apparent to us in daily Conversation, that if four or five Persons that have lived together be talking, another speaking the same Language may come in, and yet understand very little of their Discourse, in that it relateth unto Circumstances, Persons, Things, Times and Places which he knoweth not. It is no otherwise with a Man, having no insight of the times in which they were written, and the Circumstances unto which they relate, in the reading of ancient Books, whether they be Divine or humane. For example, when we fall upon the discourse about Baptisme and Regeneration, that was between our *Saviour* and *Nicodemus*, where *Christ* reproacheth him of his Ignorance in this manner: *Art thou a Doctor in Israel, and understandest not these things?* What shall we think of it? or, Wherefore should a Doctor in Israel have understood these things more than another, but that both *Baptisme* and *Regeneration* (as was shewed at large by my Lord *Phosphorus*) were Doctrines held in *Israel*? Instance in one place of a hundred, which he that hath not mastered the circumstances unto which they relate, cannot understand. Wherefore to the understanding of the Scripture, it is necessary to have ancient Languages, and the knowledge of ancient times [...]⁶⁸

Several points demand attention in this extraordinary passage. First, Harrington's neutralisation of a highly controversial biblical passage owes a great deal to Scaliger and Selden, who raised historicisation to the level where it became an effective remedy against Bible-based political legitimacy claims. I discuss the originality and secularising effect of this historicisation elsewhere, but Harrington's use of it is worth noting.⁶⁹

Second, Harrington rewrites John 3:10, the passage he quotes directly, in important ways. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus who, like Jethro, is one of the key liminal figures in Christian historical self-understanding. In the

⁶⁸ *Oceana*, p. 220. Compare Harrington's intent 'not be above the vulgar capacity' and make Greek and Latin terms, practices and concepts, accessible to those who read only English. *Prerogative*, II, 'Order of the Discourse'.

⁶⁹ Somos, *Secularisation*.

Christian scripture Nicodemus features only in the gospel of John, where he appears three times: he debates with Jesus (John 3:1–21), tries to stop the other Pharisees condemning Jesus without a trial (John 7:50–51) and helps Joseph of Arimathea move and bury Jesus' body (John 19:30–40).⁷⁰ He is a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. He is further identified as *princeps Iudaeorum* in John 3:1 and called *magister Israhel* by Jesus (John 3:10). The AV, like Wycliffe, Luther, the Bishop's and the Douay-Rheims Bibles, translate this *magister* as 'Master'; the Geneva opts for 'Teacher.' The *princeps Iudaeorum* of John 3:1 is translated by Wycliffe as 'a prince of the Jews' and as 'a ruler of the Jews' in the Bishop's, the Douay-Rheims, the Geneva and the AV. To my knowledge, Harrington's choice of 'Doctor' in an ostensible direct biblical citation is unprecedented in English.

The most probable inspiration is Sigonius, *De Republica Hebraeorum* (1582, henceforth DRH), V.x. Sigonius discusses Nicodemus and Gamaliel, another Pharisee, member of the Sanhedrin and Catholic saint who is closely associated with Nicodemus. Unlike Nicodemus, Gamaliel was known as a great doctor of Jewish law, teacher of Paul, and protector of the apostles (Acts 5:34–39; 22:3). Acts 5:34 calls Gamaliel *legis doctor* and, without specifying his source, Sigonius writes that Jesus calls Nicodemus *legis magistrum*.⁷¹ Harrington's adoption of Nicodemus' status reaffirms

⁷⁰ The emphasis on John, at the expense of the Synoptic Gospels, was a distinctive Arminian trait. Six biblical passages were cited in the 1610 *Remonstrantie*, four from John, one from The First Epistle of John, and one from Acts; none from the Synoptics. See P. Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom* (repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), vol. 3, pp. 545ff. Other details in Somos, *Secularisation*, pp. 101–103, 106, 145–46, 173. The Waldensians were another sect that preferred John over the Synoptic Gospels. This preference can be traced back to the Cathars, who also liked the Gnostic 'Gospel of the Secret Supper,' a.k.a. 'John's Interrogation.' See W. Barnstone, transl., 'Gospel of the Secret Supper,' in *The Gnostic Bible* (ed. W. Barnstone and M. Meyer; Boston: Shambhala, 2003), pp. 727–50. The Waldensians featured prominently in early modern Protestant polemic since at least the 1545 Massacre of Mérindol, and many regarded them as precursors to the Reformation. Milton and Cromwell both wrote in their defence in 1655, the year before *Oceana's* publication.

⁷¹ Sigonius, DRH, V.x, pp. 269–71, on p. 270. Sigonius' modern editor/translator speculates that Sigonius is mis-citing John 3:10, changing *magister Israhel* to *legis magistrum*. See Sigonius, *The Hebrew Republic*; transl. of *De republica Hebraeorum* (ed. G. Bartolucci, transl. P. Wyetznier; Jerusalem: Shalem Press, 2010), p. 358 n. 360. This is possible, but Sigonius rarely makes this sort of mistake, especially when it is central to his argument. He frequently identifies his biblical passages, but not in this case. My third reason for keeping an open mind about Sigonius' source is the existence of texts, including commentaries on versions of 'the Gospel of Nicodemus', where Sigonius could have found this phrase, instead of John 3:10.

that he read and used Sigonius' DRH already in *Oceana*.⁷² Yet the borrowing is not uncreative. It seems unlikely that Harrington simply confused Nicodemus and Gamaliel. The biblical passage he cites is absent from Sigonius, who wrongly paraphrases Nicodemus' description in a way that Harrington does not, and in Harrington's version Jesus is not discussing law with Nicodemus. Sigonius' usage, *together with* Harrington's emphasis on the doctrinal debate between Jesus and Nicodemus, explain Harrington's choice to have Jesus call Nicodemus a 'Doctor in Israel.' At the same time it raises the question why Harrington foregoes the opportunity to present Nicodemus as a political figure.

Nicodemus seems ideal for Harrington's purposes: a non-Christian sympathetic to the true faith, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. According to Flavius Josephus, Pharisees in general and Pharisee members of the Sanhedrin in particular were supported by the people against the aristocratic Sadducees. Josephus was a cardinal figure in seventeenth-century discussions of the Hebrew Republic, as well as of ancient prudence more broadly.⁷³ Regarding Nicodemus' faith, Catholics considered him a 'secret disciple' who overcame his timidity and chose martyrdom. In 1544, however, in the *Excuse à messieurs les Nicodémistes*, Calvin chose Nicodemus as eponym for a group of people and a set of timid and dissembling behaviours, designed to hide or misrepresent religious convictions under political pressure. The term came into use among Catholics and Protestants to refer to secret adherents of beliefs other than their national religion, and to humanists, Socinians, Arians, and others whose heresy was suspected but could not be proved.⁷⁴ In sum, Nicodemus was a liminal figure between Christianity and Judaism as well as the label for a *politique* group and behaviour to which, based on his views on religious intervention in both public behaviour and private conscience, one imagines

⁷² J. G. A. Pocock, 'Lipsius and Harrington: The Problem of Arms in Ancient and Modern Monarchy', in J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 276–304; Somos, 'Irenic'. Another adaptation from DRH, suggested by Harrington's specific string of biblical references, occurs on *Oceana*, p. 28, concerning the various ways in which God consults the people.

⁷³ For this and more Cunaeus-Harrington connections see Lea Campos Boralevi, 'James Harrington's "Machiavellian" Anti-Machiavellism', *History of European Ideas* 37 (2011); Special Issue, *Pact with the Devil* (ed. I. Evrigenis and Somos), pp. 113–19, at pp. 115–17.

⁷⁴ C. Ginzburg, *Il Nicodemismo: simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del '500* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970); A. Pettegree, 'Nicodemism and the English Reformation', in A. Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), pp. 86–117; P. Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

Harrington to be more sympathetic than toward its Calvinist persecution. All these connotations—Pharisee, member of the Sanhedrin, Jewish, crypto-Christian, proud martyr and saint, timid dissembler—were well-established and in wide use by the mid-seventeenth century. In terms of the structure and material of *Oceana*, there is little to prevent Harrington from drawing on Josephus to present Nicodemus as a Senate member, supported by the people in the Hebrew Commonwealth. His choice of ‘Doctor’ and the rest of the passage cited may hold a clue as to why he decided not to use any, or any combination, of these opportunities.

Third, Harrington makes several claims that were certain to outrage almost any Christian theologian: that the key passage supporting baptism and the notion of being born again in Christ was not an explanation of the origin of a new institution, but a reminder to a forgetful Jew of a Jewish institution, and that this historicisation of an iconically Christian doctrinal innovation, as a simple reminder of an already established Jewish custom, exemplifies a hundred other misconstruals of the New Testament. Earlier we saw Hobbes’ historicisation of baptism in comparable terms. Scaliger, Vossius and Selden are also obvious places to look for Harrington’s unusual claim that baptism and religious rebirth are originally Jewish institutions, and that Jesus meant them in that context rather than instituting something new. However, none of these likely sources prepare for Harrington’s link between baptism and religious rebirth in Judaism. In Hebrew sources the use of the ritual bath (*Mikvah*) for menstruating women, ‘polluted’ men and converts, comes closest to Harrington’s sense, but the associations with regeneration or rebirth that Harrington claims are tenuous or absent. The difference between the meaning and practice of Jewish and Christian immersions is heavily emphasised in the New Testament itself. Unsurprisingly, Harrington’s aforementioned sources, which trace many Christian institutions to their Jewish origins (to the outrage of their peers), do not make this claim about baptism.

English Imperialism: The Roman versus the Hebrew Model

Harrington is well known as a self-confessed follower of Machiavelli and proponent of the Roman imperial model for England. A less well-known fact is Harrington’s political instrumentalisation of the Bible to support his depiction of the Jews as a great military nation. This *topos* is absent from Sigonius, but prominent in Cunaeus and Josephus. Harrington discusses the military prowess and organisation of the Hebrew Republic in Machiavellian terms and in parallel with Roman military institutions and virtue.

His most probable source for this is Cunaeus' DRH; Harrington names this source in *Oceana* in a different context. This is one of several important English adaptations of Dutch secularising arguments.⁷⁵ In 1614, Cunaeus took over from Heinsius the recently created chair of history and political science at Leiden, before asking the curators for leave to become a doctor of law. According to Cunaeus, DRH was started in 1614 while he was gaining practical court experience at The Hague, and staying with Apollonius Schotte (1574–1639). Schotte pointed out to him the unappreciated treasure-trove of Maimonides, a copy of *Mishneh Torah* having been given to Cunaeus by Johannes Borelius that year. Cunaeus crossed out his earlier notes on the sacred polity and started anew.⁷⁶

This may be a polite exaggeration. Cunaeus has already discussed the Hebrew Republic extensively with Johannes Drusius (1550–1616) and his son, and continued to do so long after DRH was published. Yet it is probable that during his studies and practice at The Hague he radically reframed his inquiry, and rearranged his earlier notes in light of a newly found appreciation of the legal dimension of the biblical and Rabbinic texts and their potential to shed light on current Dutch challenges. They could do so in two ways: by providing case studies in the political and legal containment of religious controversy, and by helping to dissipate Dutch conflicts between legitimacy claims derived from direct descent from, or analogy with, one particular stage or interpretation of the succession of Jewish polities described in the Old Testament. The key to both approaches to the Hebrew Republic *topos* was the combination of comparativism and historicisation that Scaliger and Selden perfected. Cunaeus returned to Leiden, and gained tenure in civil law and the *Digest* in 1615. DRH was first published in 1617 and was reprinted in Elzevier's *Petites Républiques* in 1631.⁷⁷ Cunaeus remained an important legal scholar and practitioner until his death in 1638, defending Dutch legal scholarship from Salmasius in a series of high-profile polemics.⁷⁸ He took over the professorship of Roman law in 1630 at the death of Swanenburg, his old

⁷⁵ For others see M. Barducci, 'Clement Barksdale, Translator of Grotius: Erastianism and Episcopacy in the English Church, 1651–1658', *The Seventeenth Century* 25 (2010), pp. 265–80, and M. Barducci, 'Hugo Grotius and the English Republic: The Writings of Anthony Ascham, 1648–1650', *Grotiana* 32 (2011), pp. 40–63.

⁷⁶ Cunaeus, DRH, I.ix.

⁷⁷ Somos, *Secularisation*, chapter IV.

⁷⁸ G. Cohen, *Écrivains français en Hollande dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle* (Paris: É. Champion, 1920); P. Sellin, *Daniel Heinsius and Stuart England* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1968), pp. 43–51.

professor, and was asked to respond to Selden's *Mare clausum* by both Grotius in exile and by the Dutch Estates General (an honour he refused). It is tempting to speculate whether Cunaeus discussed Machiavelli at Leiden, whether he had a role in the Dutch translations of the *Discourses* and *The Prince* that first appeared in 1615, and to situate him within the Leiden reception of Machiavelli from Lipsius, Grotius and Hooft to the de la Court brothers.⁷⁹ For now, it is enough to indicate how Cunaeus' Machiavellisation of the Hebrew Republic in DRH affected *Oceana*.

DRH is a fascinating work. It is best known today for bringing attention to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* (c. 1170–1180).⁸⁰ It also put the Hebrew Republic into a comparative political framework and desacralised it—to an extent—by constructing comparative, historical and anthropologically grounded accounts of the emergence and evolution of its rites. It gave a Machiavellian account of Moses as both a lawgiver and prince, and of the divine polity as an expansionary republic.⁸¹ It neutralised Dutch and other divine legitimacy claims by providing a historical account of sacred laws, and by comparing them systematically to Greek and Roman laws. Furthermore, it dealt an intellectual *coup de grâce* to such claims by describing and emphasising numerous breaks and legal discontinuities within the biblical story, and by demonstrating the impossibility of translating the Jewish *imperium* from its original geographical location. Finally, it compared the agrarian laws of the Hebrew Republic with those of ancient Rome, and put them in terms of a Machiavellian analysis of republican expansion predicated on turning soldiers into farmers and the decline and fall of nations as due to aristocratic greed and revolutionary populism.

Important parts of Cunaeus' Machiavellisation of the Hebrew Republic found their way to Harrington. It is important not to overstate the case and ascribe all Harringtonian techniques for neutralising the Bible-based legitimacy claims of the Interregnum to Cunaeus, or to imply that these borrowings were unconstructive. What is fair to say is that Cunaeus had

⁷⁹ E. O. G. Haitsma Mulier, 'A Controversial Republican: Dutch Views of Machiavelli in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (ed. G. Bock, Q. Skinner and M. Viroli; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 247–63; F. Sierhuis, 'Revenge, Resistance and the Problem of Machiavellianism: P. C. Hooft's *Geerardt van Velsen* (1613)', *Dutch Crossing* 34.2 (2010), pp. 115–37.

⁸⁰ L. C. Boralevi, Introduction to *The Commonwealth of the Hebrews* by P. Cunaeus (repr. of Book I; transl. by Clement Barksdale; London, 1653; Florence: n.p., 1996).

⁸¹ Somos, 'Machiavelli's Commercial Canaan: Arms, Agrarian, and the Secularisation of Israel and the Dutch Republic', in *Machiavelli's Heirs: Humanism, Tacitism and Reason of State in the Dutch Republic* (ed. H. W. Blom; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

a defining and complex impact on Harrington. Before we can adumbrate some of his contributions, it is helpful to point toward three major indirect conduits of Cunaeus' arguments: Grotius, Vossius, and Selden. Unilinear and monogenic reconstructions of meaning are rarely convincing, in any case.

There is overwhelming evidence that Grotius, Vossius and Cunaeus developed their secularising techniques in close collaboration.⁸² Grotius is cited in Harrington's works often. Wren famously attacked him for this, although the meaning of this accusation is not straightforward. Wren's application of the Grotian label differs, for instance, from Richard Baxter's coinage of 'Grotian religion' in interesting ways.⁸³ Baxter accused Thomas Pierce, Peter Heylyn and others of following Grotius in sacrificing religious truth for the sake of social order, and pursuing irenicist and ecumenist projects at the expense of subsuming church autonomy to—here Baxter wavers over time—either Rome or the British government. Wren, himself close to Grotius' brand of Erastianism (though perhaps even closer to Hobbes'), accused Harrington instead of naively adopting Grotius' views on natural sociability and on the existence of law independent from the person of the legislator or (in a worse arrangement) legislators.⁸⁴ Baxter's Puritan construction of Grotian enemies pivots around his eclectic assertion of religion's supremacy to politics. Wren's Grotians, by contrast, wrongly posit a providential guarantee for the sociability and wisdom of the people. Book II of Harrington's *The Prerogative* attacks Hammond for the (according to Harrington) Grotian assumption that a universal law of nations exists. In England in the 1650s Grotius, like Caesar, came close to being all things to all men.⁸⁵

⁸² This is partly shown in G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, introduction and appendices to *Meletius*, by H. Grotius (Leiden: Brill, 1988), unpubl. MSS 1611; E. Rabbie, introduction and comments in *Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae pietas*, by H. Grotius (Leiden: Brill, 1995), ed. and transl. of *Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae pietas* (Leiden: Iohannes Patius, 1613); H.-J. van Dam, introduction and comments to *De imperio summarum potestatum circa sacra*, by H. Grotius (Leiden: Brill, 2001, 2 vols.), ed. and transl. of *De imperio summarum potestatum circa sacra* (wr. 1617, first publ. Middelburg: Anthony de Later [printed as Paris, n.p.] 1647)], vol. 2, including pertinent Grotius-Vossius correspondence; Somos, *Secularisation*.

⁸³ R. Baxter, *The Grotian Religion Discovered*... (London: R.W. for Nevill Simmons and by Thomas Brewster and by John Starkey, 1658).

⁸⁴ For Harrington's defense and affirmation of Grotian natural sociability see *Prerogative*, I.v.23–4.

⁸⁵ I am sympathetic to Trevor-Roper's joint description of French, Dutch and English Arminians. However, unlike largely retrospective counter-arguments, the primary sources for the reception of Arminianism also problematise his presentation of the 'indivisibility,

While the influence of Grotius on Harrington is considerable, the portrayal of Jewish military valour and the inapplicability of Mosaic laws in *Oceana* came partly from Cunaeus. Legal discontinuities within the biblical story and the historicisation of the Hebrew Republic are discussed by both, but are more prominent in Cunaeus.⁸⁶ Natural sociability in Harrington comes from Grotius, as Wren pointed out, while the use of Jethro and Nicodemus is adapted from neither Grotius nor Cunaeus but Sigonius. Harrington's odd assertion in *The Prerogative* that Israel, Holland and Genoa could rightly use money instead of land in their republican expansion, because their landmass was limited, is patterned on the Dutch Machiavellisation of the Hebrew Republic.

Harrington's account of the divine polity in Machiavellian terms includes, among other institutions, emphasis on the military valour of the Jews, the relationship between their kings, priests, prophets, aristocrats and people, the insistence on the sovereignty of the people even over God when he was their king, and the inappropriateness of the divine polity's colonial practices.⁸⁷ Like Cunaeus, through this Machiavellisation he renders the Hebrew Republic fully comparable to Rome. It is necessary to further explore the nature of this Machiavellisation and the new footing on which it places the comparison with Rome in order to grasp the extent to which Harrington makes it impossible to use the Hebrew Republic as a model for England. After discussing the good but inimitable features of Israel, and its bad institutions unfit for emulation, then doing the same for the Roman republic, Harrington adds a higher level of political analysis on top of comparativism and chooses Rome as the most authoritative object lesson for England.

The theoretical foundations of using historical models to inform future imperial practice connect Harrington and Selden. They both reject old-fashioned comparativism and argue that universal laws and political rules cannot be derived from a systematic comparison of any number of polities, past or present. At the same time, they both defend their historicisation

the universality, of the Arminian movement.' See H. Trevor-Roper, 'The Religious Origins of the Enlightenment', in H. Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967; repr. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), pp. 179–218.

⁸⁶ Emphasis on biblical discontinuities in Hobbes and Harrington are compared by Pocock, 'Introduction', p. 79, and were recognised by Wren, *Considerations*, 41, cited by Pocock, 'Introduction', p. 89.

⁸⁷ Somos, 'Machiavelli's Commercial'.

of the Hebrew Republic and its inclusion in a comparative scheme that negates its special status, and they justify their use of Rome as a historical paradigm in similar terms. Selden shows in *Mare clausum* that universal consent, presented by others as derivable from the common legal practice of historical and contemporary states and forming the core of all legal systems, is illusory, and could not supply evidence and details of natural law even if it existed. Land-locked states, for instance, have nothing to say about maritime affairs; and past empires all had weaknesses and fell. Similarly, Rome and a few other states are paradigmatic for current international law and imperialism not because Roman law is the source of *ius gentium*, as many lawyers argue, but because they were successful and acted in a civilised manner.⁸⁸ When Wren challenged Harrington to include more states in his comparative scheme, Harrington countered in *The Prerogative* that it is not the number of states included that matters and that Rome is a great illustration not because it is a definitive source of laws and institutions, but because of its domestic and imperial success.⁸⁹

Comparativism and historicisation are key defences of these *politiques* against divine legitimacy claims, but they are not the whole story. It is

⁸⁸ Selden, *Mare clausum*, I.xxiv.

⁸⁹ *Prerogative*, I.i.4–5, with Harrington ridiculing Wren's challenge to broaden the basis of comparison to add Babylon, Persia, Egypt, China, and Amazonia to Israel, Greece, and Rome. Wren's mockery of Harrington as following Grotius in complaining about those who confuse *ius gentium* with Roman *ius civile* (*Considerations* p. 28, answered in *Prerogative*, I.v.28–29) could be just as easily directed against Selden. Also see *Oceana*, p. 221 and *Prerogative*, II.ii.9–10, for the story of Rome and the Privernates as a sign of 'the *Genius* of the Roman Common-wealth' (p. 10); but *Prerogative*, II.ii.14 on Romans leaving occupied states' monarchies intact. Selden's and Harrington's approach to deriving law and political prudence from history is in interesting contrast with Scaliger's and Vossius' omnivorous comparativism, and with Grotius' legal standard of the universal consent of nations. It also differs from the 'mathematical' or 'mechanical' approach that seeks to identify hard-and-fast rules. Harrington restates his counter-argument to Wren's comparativist challenge several times, e.g. *Prerogative*, I.viii.46–7, I.x.74–6, 82. Cf. Cary, 'Reply', pp. 136–37. In a related argument, Harrington explains his selective handling of evidence by claiming to write 'an *Epitome*,' not a systematic study. *Prerogative*, I.xii.117. And I.xii.119: 'A Politicall is like a naturall body. Commonwealths resemble and differ, as men resemble and differ; among whom you shall not see two faces, or two dispositions, that are alike.' (Cf. Grotius: 'Every nation has its own morals and a nature of its own, and particular institutions corresponding to them. Once you start trying to transfer these to another structure, the outcome will as likely as not be a completely dissimilar duplicate.' *De republica emendanda* [1601? MSS. ed. A. Eyffinger. *Grotiana*, New Series 5, 1984]) *Oceana*'s differences from Rome, Venice, and other models are as significant as the similarities. *Oceana* has 'a soul or *Genius*, altogether new in the World.' Cf. reference to Bacon's Essay 29, on time as the greatest innovator, and new medicine being better than the old, in *Prerogative*, I.xi.101. *Prerogative* II asks 'the Grandee, or Learned Common-wealths-man,' whether *Oceana*'s new genius is less addicted to the nobility and the clergy than before. 'Advertisement,' heading 4.

equally important to note that at the higher level of political prudence, established through the study of history, Selden and Harrington choose Rome and not Israel as their paradigm. Arguably Milton goes the other way, ascribing to Israel the exact same political prudence as Selden and Harrington assign to Rome. This prudence is based on history, comparisons, and the choice of a single model that is most informative but still leaves the reader free to infer truths that can be learned from, but not found in, either the paradigmatic case or the totality of historical cases.

The whole Judaic law is either political, and to take pattern by that, no Christian nation ever thought itself obliged in conscience; or moral, which contains in it the observation of whatsoever is substantially, and perpetually true and good, either in religion, or course of life. That which is thus moral, besides what we fetch from those unwritten laws and ideas which nature hath engraven in us, the Gospel, as stands with her dignity most, lectures to us from her own authentic handwriting and command, not copies out from the borrowed manuscript of a subservient scroll, by way of imitating.⁹⁰

This is also a secularising counter-argument to 'chosen nation' theories, but does not go as far as Selden and Harrington, who agree with the distance introduced from the divine polity, but also replace it with Rome as the paradigmatic model of prudence.

Recognising this connection between Selden's and Harrington's comparativism and historicisation and the prudential superstructure built on them not only confirms a host of connections between their refusal to vindicate Parliament from the Sanhedrin and their arsenal for countering the enthusiasts, but also sharpens the question why Selden shifted paradigmatic prudence from imperial Rome in *Mare clausum* to the Noachide precepts in *De iure naturali*. The previous argument, namely, that this was a smart way to build common ground between various enthusiasts while simultaneously depriving them of all divine legitimacy claims, remains credible as far as it goes, but in the light of Harrington's successful choice not to follow this shift it seems incomplete. What was it that Selden found in the Noachide precepts but not in Rome? We know that the answer is neither divine approval nor universal consensus. The most likely solution is antiquity: as precedents and the growing body of past decisions informed common law, the Noachide precepts came to represent the original and most usable body of law before its dispersion and variegation into

⁹⁰ J. Milton, *The Reason of Church-Government Urged Against Prelaty* (London: John Rothwell, 1642, but dated 1641), p. 21, but see chapters III and IV in general.

diverse legal systems. The *Hebraica veritas* is no longer *prisca theologia*, merely *prisca sapientia* dressed theologically.⁹¹ This transformation of humanist historicisation has been noticed recently in Selden, as well as in other formulations in Hobbes and Harrington, but not in a satisfactory, let alone connected, manner.⁹²

Moreover, there is a parallel whereby both Selden and Harrington reinterpret the relationship between the natural and the national. States' and nations' practice can conform to a common mould of right behaviour, moral realisation and political necessity, but if one cannot find either any, or overwhelming, historical evidence in support of a moral, legal or political truth, one can still reject the results of comparativism in favour of the truth. It is possible to find a common core of law, politics or religion, but it is also possible to arrive at truths without regard for the actual experience of mankind until now.⁹³ We saw how Selden and Harrington applied this principle to set limits to the applicability of historical models to current problems, and also how these limits can be transcended by learning lessons in prudence from historical studies, instead of merely assessing the desirability of emulating certain institutions. Selden, like Harrington, applies this natural-national relationship to religion: 'That there are many national gods, but only one natural,' Selden writes,

So that as of old in the *Jewish Church*, so also in the *Christian*, the use of humane Reason among the vulgar, though free in other things, yet when it dived into the contemplation or debate of Religious matters, it hath often been most deservedly restrained, by certain set-Maxims, Principles, and Rules of holy Writ, as Religious Bolts and Bars upon the Soul; lest it should wantonize and wander, either into the old Errors of most Ages and Nations,

⁹¹ H. Stubbe, *An Essay in Defence of the Good Old Cause* (London: n.p., 1659), pp. 106–32. But see J. Selden, 'Notes upon Sir John Fortescue Knight, Lord Chief Justice of England', to chapter XVII, pp. 7–22 of J. Fortescue, *De laudibus legum Angliae*, with R. de Hengham, *Two Summes* (ed. J. Selden; London: Adam Islip, 1616).

⁹² For Selden's 'historicism' or 'historicity' see M. A. Ziskind, 'John Selden: Criticism and Affirmation of the Common Law Tradition', *The American Journal of Legal History* 19 (1975), pp. 22–39; H. J. Berman, 'The Origins of Historical Jurisprudence: Coke, Selden, Hale', *The Yale Law Journal* 103 (1994), pp. 1651–1738, esp. p. 1695. On secularising historicisation in Hobbes and Harrington see J. G. A. Pocock, 'Time, History and Eschatology in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes', in J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time* (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 148–201; J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

⁹³ See the short discussion on integrated humanist reconsiderations of the optical, mathematical, literary, theological and political connections between verisimilitude, probability, and prudence in Somos, *Secularisation*, pp. 56–58, 122 n. 88, 126–69, 287–95, 313–15, 372–73, and chapter V.

or after the new devices of a rambling phansie. And truly, such a cours as this hath ever been observed in Religious Government.⁹⁴

These aspects of how Cunaeus, Selden, Milton and Harrington considered the identity and meaning of historical paradigms illustrates the context in which Harrington's preference for Rome over Israel can be understood, both as direct political model and as the heuristic, supra-historical paradigm of political prudence. Irenic secularisation is the best description of the politics behind Harrington's rejection of the Hebrew Republic as either a direct model for English institutions, or a source of human prudence superior to Rome. There are numerous instances in *Oceana* of Harrington following Cunaeus' depiction of the divine polity in Machiavellian terms. Oceana's practice of sorting the citizen army into units and calling the distinct legions, tribes and other units to battle are compared to Roman and Israelite practices, the latter attested by Judg 20:9 and 1 Sam 11:7. Oddly, Harrington uses the latter passage, in which Saul cuts up oxen and sends out the pieces as a call to arms and a threat to those who refuse, to support property limits for those who can serve in the militia. Machiavelli is invoked in his discussion of the parallel Roman practices.⁹⁵

In another instance, Harrington reverses the Bible's account of the divine polity to support his politics. Rome fell due to its unequal agrarian.

But your C.W. is founded upon an equal Agrarian, and if *the earth be given unto the Sonnes of men*, this ballance, is the ballance of justice, such an one as in having due regard unto the different industry, or different men, yet *faithfully judgeth the poor. And the King that faithfully judgeth the poor, his Throne shall be established for ever*, much more the Commonwealth; seeing that equality which is the necessary dissolution of Monarchy, is the generation, the very life and soul of a Commonwealth; And now, if ever, I may be excusable, seeing that the Throne of the Commonwealth may be established for ever, is consonant unto the holy Scriptures.⁹⁶

It is hard to miss the satirical tone. The first citation is from Ps 115:16: 'The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.' It is a psalm of praise and contrasts the heathen's inanimate idols with the living Lord. He gave the earth to men and shall be praised here and now, as the dead cannot praise him. The second passage is from Prov 29:14 (given erroneously on the margin as Prov 20:14).

⁹⁴ DOS, I.vii.43. Cf. *Leviathan*, pp. 52–55, and *Oceana*, p. 289.

⁹⁵ *Oceana*, pp. 230–31.

⁹⁶ *Oceana*, p. 258. Cf. p. 271, 'Now if you adde... Psal. 110.3', for the argument that the Father's Kingdom was a republic, therefore the Son's will be, too.

In the single instance in *Oceana* where Harrington explicitly invokes the Bible to support his scheme, he reverses its meaning twice. Firstly, the king—according to the Bible safe if he judges the poor faithfully—is overthrown by the same equality. Secondly, what sustains the king in Proverbs 20, in *Oceana* sustains the Commonwealth instead.

Harrington combines several genres, or features of genres, in *Oceana*. The author's awareness and adoption of formal characteristics of utopias and romances have been excellently discussed.⁹⁷ The full significance of the satirical register, increasingly prominent in *The Prerogative* and *The Art of Lawgiving*, has been occluded by the *ad hominem* and provocative polemic Harrington is known for, but behind it one finds stylistic and argumentative elements lifted from the political satires that bloomed in the mid-seventeenth century. These presented subjects, including monarchy, clerical authority and Christianity, rather than only literary and *ad hoc* opponents, in an irreverent and systematically subversive fashion, drawing attention to their irreparable, institutional shortcomings beyond the individual failures of kings, priests, uncritical or cocksure believers, and daft polemicists.⁹⁸

For the present purpose, let it suffice to bring in another heavily satirical treatment of the Bible in *Oceana*. The passage in question, Lord Archon's speech after his 'Epitome of the whole Common-Wealth,' uses a concentration of biblical phrases to mark the transition to pure satire.⁹⁹

My Lords, If you will have fewer Orders in a Commonwealth you will have more, for where she is not perfect at first, every day, every houre will produce a new Order, the end whereof is to have no Order at all, but to grinde with the clack of some Demagogue; Is hee providing already for his golden Thumb? Lift up your head; Away with Ambition, that fulsome complexion of a States-man, tempered like Sylla's (Luto cum sanguine) with blood and muck. And the Lord give unto his Senators wisdome, and make our faces to

⁹⁷ S. V. Liljegren, *Studies on the Origin and Early Tradition of English Utopian Fiction* (Uppsala: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1961). J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing, 1516–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁹⁸ Somos, *Secularisation*, chapters III–IV. Harrington's citation of Juvenal's *difficile est Satyram non scribere* (Satire I.30) in the Preface to *The Prerogative*, justifying an attack on university theologians, echoes Cunaeus' use of the same excuse in a letter to Casaubon concerning *Sardi venales*. The satirical register is often heard throughout *The Prerogative*. Another shared feature of these works is the use of Erasmus, whom both Cunaeus and Harrington position as an authority who suffered for his moderation and non-partisanship, and whose writings they promptly misappropriate for their own agenda. For *The Prerogative*, II.i, see Pocock's notes in Harrington, *Works*, pp. 503–506.

⁹⁹ *Oceana*, pp. 273–80.

shine, that we may be a light unto them that sit in darkness, and the shadow of death, to guide their feet in the way of peace.—In the Name of God, What's the matter !—¹⁰⁰

Archon's speech is interrupted by the howling of Philadelphus, the Secretary of the Council, who has just read a letter from Boccalini, the 'Secretary of *Parnassus*,' about a theatrical showdown between Caesar and Andrea Doria, staged by the Phaebean king. Archon's biblical citation, ending with Shandyesquely punctuated exasperation, is a composite eclectic enough to segue easily into the satire that continues until the end of the Epitome.

Harrington gives no marginal reference to the Bible passage that is cited. It is based partly on Ps 105:22, where God is said 'To bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom.' The next element, the shining face, is a recurring biblical theme denoting prophetic or blessed status. The Lord's face is said to shine (e.g. Num 6:25; Ps 4:6; 31:16; 80:3; 119:135; Dan 9:17; Rev 1:16), as is Christ's (Matt 17:2), but in this case Archon asks God to make the legislators' face shine. The obvious source is Exod 34:29, in which Moses' face shines as he returns with the tablets. '[T]hat we may be a light unto them that sit in the darkness' comes from Zacharias' prophecy about his son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:79), cited with slight variations from the AV. Pocock deciphers Harrington's composite text of Ps 105:22; Exod 34:29 and Luke 1:79 incorrectly, as Ps 105:35 and Luke 1:78–79.¹⁰¹ Lord Archon's breathless crescendo of scripture-heaping is absurd by the time he calls upon senators to become like John the Baptist: neither biblical politicians, nor a soteriological culmination. *Oceana's* concluding tone is the same with which *The Prerogative* and the De la Court brothers' *Consideratien van Staat* begin.¹⁰² Trajano Boccalini (1556–1613) is named and cited in all three texts, published within three years, and a major inspiration for their political orientation.¹⁰³

Finally, let me suggest that Harrington's imperial vision is not without irony, and that he uses the Bible to express it. In the preceding passage,

¹⁰⁰ *Oceana*, p. 281.

¹⁰¹ Harrington, *Works*, p. 337 n. 2.

¹⁰² J. De la Court and P. De la Court, *Consideratien en exempelen van staat . . .* (Amsterdam: Ian Jacobsz Dommerkracht, 1660), rev. ed. of *Consideratien van Staat, ofte Polityke Weeg-schaal* (Amsterdam: Iacob Volkertsz Zinbreker, 1661).

¹⁰³ For Boccalini and the De la Court brothers see A. Weststeijn, 'The Power of "Pliant Stuff": Fables and Frankness in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republicanism', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72 (2011), pp. 1–27; A. Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, pp. 129–32, *passim*.

Archon weighs the pros and cons of various means of pursuing enlightened imperialism:

Lying lips are an abomination unto the Lord, if setting up for liberty you impose yokes, hee will assuredly destroy you; On the other side, to go about a work of this nature, by a League without an head, is to abdicate that Magistracy, wherewithall hee hath not only indued you, but whereof hee will require an account of you; for *cursed is hee that doth the work of the Lord negligently*. Wherefore you are to take the course of Rome: if you have subdued a Nation that is capable of liberty, you shall make them a present of it [...]¹⁰⁴

Harrington's unspecified citation in support of expansion comes from Jer 48:10 (given by Pocock as 48:16).¹⁰⁵ It is subverted twice. Firstly, 'negligently' is often rendered as 'fraudulently.' The Bishop's Bible gives 'fraudulently,' Douay-Rheims and the AV have 'deceitfully,' and Coverdale and the Geneva have 'negligently.' Harrington's choice to translate the Vulgate's *fraudulenter* as 'negligently' would not matter, had it not been exactly his point here to distinguish between the fraudulent and the negligent pursuit of the Lord's work.

Secondly, he omits the second half of the Jeremiah verse, well-known in connection with the Curse of Meroz (Judg 5:23): 'Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood' (AV). There is a strikingly sinister and violent undertone to Archon's portrayal of Oceana's ostensibly benign imperialism. This fits in with other evidence that Harrington had doubts about Cromwell's Irish and Scottish campaigns and his designs for an overseas empire.¹⁰⁶ The point here is that Harrington substantially and tendentiously modified biblical passages, used them satirically in political arguments, and rendered some of them noticeably inappropriate to the subject matter in hand. This fits in with the rest of the evidence presented here and shows his alleged Hebraic republicanism in a new light.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *Oceana*, p. 268.

¹⁰⁵ Harrington, *Works*, p. 330 n. 1.

¹⁰⁶ For the diplomatic rumour that Cromwell planned to become 'emperor of the seas occidentalis' see i.a. Armitage, *Ideological*, pp. 119–20. In another case, Harrington describes Oceana's imperial mission in powerful biblical language, only to conclude that Machiavelli is the most relevant, and at his most relevant, to Oceana's republican expansion, and that Rome should be the model for it. 'A Commonwealth, I say ... the Paragon, the Commonwealth of Rome.' *Oceana*, pp. 259–61.

¹⁰⁷ E. Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Conclusion and Outlook

This paper has tried to show the presence and importance of systematic exegetical attempts to neutralise the Bible in seventeenth-century English political and legal writings. The striking idiosyncrasies of Bible interpretations in Selden's account of the origin of private property in *Mare clausum*, Hobbes' *unum necessarium* in *Leviathan*, and popular sovereignty, church-state relations and imperialism in Harrington's *Oceana*, were uncovered and explained in terms of the authors' secularising and irenicist intentions, and connections between these works' secularising exegeses were noted.

Isolated cases of English secularisation make tactical sense as reactions to specific political problems, such as competing legitimacy claims made irreconcilable by theological justification, or rival visions of constitutional specifics. Strategic discourses with a secularising effect, such as minimalism, ecumenism and the reprioritisation of natural over divine law, begin to emerge from connected cases of English secularisation, as in the three illustrative cases above. A hypothesis suggested by such analyses is that a new form of natural law, arising from secularising deconstructions of Christian political and legal theory, offered an unexpected advantage in 'soft imperialism,' and may be a factor in the otherwise puzzling speed and extent of the early modern success of imperialism by small states like England and the United Provinces. Contrary to Iberian and French colonial projects, Dutch and English thinkers worked out a way to encounter native rulers and legal systems without a pressing need to take a position on issues like just war, forced conversion, slavery, and non-Christians' right to property and sovereignty. The new system proved effective in securing non-European co-operation and saving the economic and ideological costs of non-secular commercial and colonial expansion. It created, structured, and maintained the British Empire prior to the re-theologisation of political and legal theory in the nineteenth century. The neutralisation of the Bible by Selden, Hobbes and Harrington for the particular legal and political arguments discussed above offers analytical categories for revisiting the intellectual foundations of not only the strange success of the British Empire, but also the relative decline of Iberian Catholic imperialism and the rise of Enlightenment American, French and Prussian exceptionalism.

One should note that this is not a rewarmed version of the 'Protestant progress' model, including its Whig, Marxist and neo-conservative incarnations. Firstly, unintended consequences, stops and starts, significant

failures and counter-trends challenge any reductionist explanatory model. Influential secularising writings often contained confessionally ecumenist, epistemically minimalist, and broadly Erastian elements, while prioritising the need for social order over a particular set of religious beliefs. Unlike unseasonably blunt statements of secularism, such irenicist texts had a secularising effect on the European worldview and institutions, irrespective of whether they were written in the defence of politics from religion or *vice versa*.¹⁰⁸

Secondly, I see secularisation, not Protestantism, parliamentarism or mercantilism, as the key factor that enabled small states to conquer and hold large swathes of the globe. Secularisation, whereby a range of thorny religious issues could simply be ignored, made 'soft imperialism' possible. Secularisation is not an epiphenomenon in the soft law-successful imperialism relationship, because secularisation also played a decisive role in the Dutch and English capacity for domestic pacification and economic growth. Without secularisation, it would have been impossible, or at least insufficient, for successful imperialism to construct and offer soft international law world-wide. An emerging parallel to this formulation of secularisation as a process, rather than a moment or a norm, is the current work on the early modern emergence of 'good' and 'bad' kinds of toleration. The top-down institutional toleration that depended entirely on absolutism (more or less enlightened), is instructively contrasted with the institutional toleration arising from expanding definitions of individual rights (a story yet unwritten). The states that relied on the former, including France, faced fundamental systemic shocks as the strong monarchy was replaced by nascent representative democracies.

Neither does this model bestow moral superiority on secularised, soft imperialism. Stadial theories could easily replace Christianity. The originality of secularised natural law was that it applied to everyone equally either immediately, or at a future stage of development. In the latter case, the natives depicted as being at a lower stage of development imposed trusteeship and obligations of development on their colonisers. It is possible to compare this relationship with the non-secularised set of obligations of conversion and Christian re-education, but the colonial discursive tradition created by secularised natural law encountered less resistance and proved easier to maintain than the colonialism of Christian divine law. However,

¹⁰⁸ Somos, *Secularisation*, pp. 1–6, 30–42, 439, 442–45.

this colonial advantage was less the achievement of omniscient and omnipresent proto-capitalist oppressive states than a corollary and a probably unintended consequence of the secularisation first performed to secure domestic stability in states troubled by religious conflict, which included the renegotiation of the powers of clergy and the contestation of the sources and hierarchies of law and of the general theory of property. Closer studies of biblical criticism in these great texts of Western political and legal theory can unearth the foundations of such domestic secularisations, as well as the imperialist doctrines and successful approaches emanating from the gradually, if sometimes erratically, secularised state.

THE ARMIES OF GOG, THE MERCHANTS OF TARSHISH, AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Andrew Mein

The Gog prophecy in Ezekiel 38–39 is one of the more difficult parts of a difficult book. Israel, finally restored in peace to the Promised Land, faces one last threat in the person of Gog of Magog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. As the chapters progress, Gog gathers together an enormous horde of warriors with which he assaults peaceful Israel, only to be defeated not by human arms but by the miraculous power of God. A little less than half way through Ezekiel 38, as the monstrous Gog is about to launch his invasion of the land, the Authorized Version reads:

Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil? (Ezek 38:13).¹

At first sight these words do not look a very promising source of British imperial rhetoric. And yet, for a surprisingly large number of Victorian writers on prophecy that is precisely what they became. My aim in this paper is to examine how the merchants of Tarshish embarked on this imperial adventure, and to offer some reflection on the consumption of prophecy in mid-nineteenth-century Britain.

Decoding Gog in Nineteenth-Century Britain

The identification of Gog has always been controversial, and many Christian readers over the centuries have been tempted to find the political and military travails of their own age encoded in the text.² For St Ambrose (c. 339–397), Gog represented the Goths, marauding towards the Italian

¹ Biblical quotations are from the Authorized Version (KJV), since this is the biblical text most nineteenth-century British readers would have used.

² P. S. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 152–57.

heartlands. For Martin Luther (1483–1546), it was the Ottoman Turks, who had reached the gates of Vienna for the first time in 1529. In England, William Lowth (1660–1732; father of the more famous Robert and author of the main 18th-century English commentary on Ezekiel) also sees the Turks as likely candidates, and this view is shared by the widely-read commentary of Thomas Scott (published 1788–92 and in numerous later editions).³ However, as Scott's commentary established its popularity, great events were afoot and the interpretation of Ezekiel was changing with them. The French Revolution and Napoleonic wars had thrown Europe into turmoil. It is no surprise that many devout Christians believed that the end times were upon them, which they sought to confirm from apocalyptic texts like Ezekiel and Revelation. For several British writers at this time Gog wore the face of Napoleon. The conservatively-minded pamphleteer Lewis Mayer expected him to meet his end in Palestine in 1809.⁴ Granville Penn (1761–1844; grandson of the founder of Pennsylvania) argued in 1814 that the prophecy of Gog had just been fulfilled in Napoleon's failed invasion of Russia.⁵ Nevertheless, as the century wore on the tectonic plates of international politics shifted and Gog came to acquire a new face, that of the Russian Empire—an interpretation which has had remarkable staying power amongst Christian millenarians for almost 200 years.⁶

The early and mid-nineteenth century in Britain witnessed a veritable flood of millenarian publications in the form of books, journals and pamphlets, along with numerous addenda, reviews and rebuttals. The authors of these works were less likely than before to be lower- or middle-class sectarians in the mould of Richard Brothers (1757–1824) or Joanna Southcott (1750–1814).⁷ Given impetus by such luminaries as Edward Irving (1792–1834), founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, or the prominent

³ W. Lowth, *A Commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel* (London: W. Mears, 1723), p. 309; T. Scott, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old And New Testaments, According to the Publick Version; with Explanatory Notes, Practical Observations and Copious Marginal References* (London: L. B. Seeley, 1810), vol. 4, ad loc.

⁴ L. Mayer, *Bonaparte, the Emperor of the French, Considered as the Lucifer and Gog of Isaiah and Ezekiel* (London: Williams & Smith, 4th edn, 1806).

⁵ G. Penn, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel Concerning Gogue, the Last Tyrant of the Church, His Invasion of Ros, His Discomfiture, and Final Fall; Examined and in Part Illustrated* (London: J. Murray, 1814).

⁶ Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, 154–80; M. Lieb, *Children of Ezekiel: Aliens, UFOs, the Crisis of Race, and the Advent of End Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 84–99.

⁷ G. Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c. 1800–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 154. On Brothers and Southcott see, e.g., S. Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of

banker and MP Henry Drummond (1786–1860), premillennial beliefs moved from the margins far closer to the centre of evangelical theology.⁸ In these years the predominant form of prophetic interpretation in Britain was not the futurist dispensationalism of J. N. Darby and the Scofield Reference Bible, which later took such hold in the USA. Rather it was what has been called the ‘historicist’ or ‘continuous historical’ school of prophetic interpretation.⁹ The crucial difference in the mid-nineteenth century was that Darby postponed the fulfilment of biblical prophecy to an undetermined time in the future, after the rapture of true Christians, whereas the continuous historical school saw the fulfilment of prophecy as already in process. They were therefore much more inclined to develop elaborate prophetic calendars, to scan their newspapers for ‘signs of the times’, and to see some continuing role for church and nation through the end times and beyond. While some millenarians published anonymously, others were proud to display their status as clergymen of the established church (mostly the Church of England, but with a few prominent contributors from the Church of Scotland). Premillennial theology is very often combined with a conservative political stance, since there is little incentive to reform society when the millennium is just around the corner, and Ralph Brown notes that, amongst the middle and upper classes, ‘adventist expectations were most prominent during those periods when working-class radicalism and political activism seemed most threatening to the political status and value system of the established order.’¹⁰ This was certainly the case for most mid-century millenarians, who tended to be politically conservative Tories: they are strong defenders of Britain’s Protestant constitution, and opponents of Catholic emancipation, horrified by the French revolution, the reform act of 1832, and the revolutions of 1848. There can be little doubt that this was an influential strand within British evangelicalism: it is likely that by 1855 half or more of the Church of England’s evangelical clergy supported a premillennial position.¹¹

Pennsylvania Press, 2006); D. Madden, *The Paddington Prophet: Richard Brothers’s Journey to Jerusalem* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

⁸ Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 154–55; R. Brown, ‘Victorian Anglican Evangelicalism: The Radical Legacy of Edward Irving’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58 (2007), pp. 675–704.

⁹ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 81–85; also M. W. Carpenter, *George Eliot and the Landscape of Time: Narrative Form and Protestant Apocalyptic History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), esp. pp. 9–25.

¹⁰ Brown, ‘Victorian Anglican Evangelicalism’, p. 681.

¹¹ Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 155; Brown, ‘Victorian Anglican Evangelicalism’, 684.

The interpreters of prophecy undoubtedly thought of themselves not as marginal fanatics but as rational, scholarly historians of the future and passionate supporters of an orderly and paternal establishment. Ezekiel's Gog prophecy was therefore a highly appropriate source to mine for information about the course of current and future events.

The Eastern Question and the Rise of the Russian Gog

If the general atmosphere of mid-nineteenth century Britain was a fertile ground for apocalyptic speculation, nevertheless a combination of both exegetical tradition and political expediency was required for the identification of Gog with Russia to take hold. Politically, the so-called 'Eastern Question' was one of the perennial problems of nineteenth-century international relations.¹² In brief, the issue was how to deal with the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Turkey—'the sick man of Europe'—was seen as increasingly weak, struggling to hold on to its European provinces in the Balkans and its control of the Near East. At the same time, the major European powers were concerned both to reap what benefit they could from Ottoman decline and to prevent their rivals from taking similar advantage.¹³ For the expanding Russian Empire, key concerns were the control of Istanbul and the Bosphorus, the only passage from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. But also prominent in Russian thinking and rhetoric were religious and nationalist concerns; both to protect fellow Slav Christians in the Balkans and to secure rights of access for Orthodox pilgrims to the holy land. For the British, increasing volumes of trade within the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century made preserving Ottoman power economically worthwhile. Moreover, it was through the Ottoman Near East that Britain had its direct access to India, the most prized of imperial possessions. Britain and Russia were the two world powers of the day, and as the century progressed, the British public became increasingly aware of competing interests in Central Asia

¹² A. L. MacFie, *The Eastern Question 1774–1923* (Harlow: Longman, 2nd edn. 1996); O. Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), pp. 23–60; cf. also E. M. Reisenauer, '“Tidings Out of the East”: World War I, the Eastern Question and British Millennialism', in K. Kinane and M. A. Ryan (eds.), *End of Days: Essays on the Apocalypse from Antiquity to Modernity* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2009), pp. 142–71.

¹³ W. Baumgart, *The Crimean War, 1853–1856* (London: Arnold, 1999), pp. 5–6.

(the so-called 'Great Game'); there was open conflict between the two nations with the outbreak of the Crimean war in 1853.¹⁴

Exegetically, the association of Gog with Russia was not a new one. It has its roots in a preference for the Septuagint version of 38:1, which sees the Hebrew *rosh* not as 'head' or 'chief' but as the proper name 'Rhos', which was then connected with 'Rus' and Russia. Nineteenth-century writers could look back as far as Bochart's magisterial *Geographia Sacra* of 1646, and find the idea proposed in the English commentators William Lowth and William Newcome, as well as more recent scientific studies such as Gesenius' lexicon.¹⁵ Not only did Ezekiel's 'prince of Rhos' imply the Tsar, but the identification was also made more secure by the association of the subsequent geographical names, Meshech and Tubal, with parts of the Russian Empire. For example, the pseudonymous 'Anael', in his 1854 pamphlet *Gog and Magog, or the Doom of Russia*, draws on Josephus, Bochart, and the Jewish Writer David Levi for support and concludes:

we may presume the Mosocheni and Thobelites, whom Josephus mentions [*Ant.* 1.6.1], to have advanced toward the north, and given their names to the cities of Moscow (or Moskwa) and Tobolsk, the European and Asiatic capitals of the Russian Empire. Thus we see the appropriateness of the phrase, 'Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,' as applied to that overgrown power, of which the Czar in the pride of his exaltation call himself 'the Autocrat'.¹⁶

Proponents of the Russian theory were not necessarily millenarians themselves. Even the Scottish Presbyterian theologian Patrick Fairbairn (1805–1874), a vocal opponent of such speculations, goes so far as to claim that 'there is hence great probability in the opinion, that the people referred to were the Russi, from whom the modern Russians derive their name'.¹⁷

¹⁴ There is an enormous literature on the Crimean War: for orientation see, e.g., MacFie, *Eastern Question*, pp. 28–33; Baumgart, *Crimean War*; O. Figes, *Crimea*.

¹⁵ Lowth, *A Commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel*, p. 310; W. Newcome, *An Attempt Towards an Improved Version, a Metrical Arrangement, and an Explanation of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Dublin: R. Marchbank, 1788), p. 143; W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und chaldäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 3rd edn, 1828), p. 758.

¹⁶ Anael, *Gog and Magog; or, the Doom of Russia as Pourtrayed in the Prophetic Scriptures: with Remarks on the Present Crisis and the Battle of Armageddon, Together with Strictures on the Pamphlet, 'the Coming Struggle'* (London: Piper, Stevenson, and Spence, 1854), p. 9; the triple identification is widely accepted amongst prophetic writers of the period.

¹⁷ P. Fairbairn, *Ezekiel and the Book of His Prophecy: An Exposition* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 3rd edn, 1863), p. 415 n. 2; on the other hand the conservative German commentator E. W. Hengstenberg (1802–1869) is dismissive of all historicizing interpretations and notes that 'the poor Russians have been here very unjustly arranged among the enemies of God's people' (E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Prophecies of the Prophet Ezekiel Elucidated* [trans. A. C. Murphy and J. G. Murphy; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869], p. 333).

The subsequent associations of Meshech with Moscow and Tubal with the Siberian capital Tobolsk were less assured (and Fairbairn does not countenance them), but they seemed to most millenarian authors to follow naturally on from the initial recognition.

The combination of these exegetical insights with the rising urgency of the Eastern Question and the fear of Russia allowed interpreters of the prophets to map the course of the future by placing Ezekiel 38–39 alongside relevant texts from Isaiah, Daniel, and of course Revelation. Eric Reisenauer describes a four-stage scheme, which dominated prophetic speculation for the next hundred years:¹⁸

- i) The decline of the Ottoman Empire
- ii) The restoration of the Jews to Palestine, aided/instigated by Britain
- iii) The threat of Russian encroachment onto Ottoman lands, and especially the Holy Land
- iv) A final climactic war between 'a hostile Russian confederation and a British-led alliance of nations offering protection to the Jews'¹⁹

The degree to which this scheme continued to fire the prophetic imagination is testimony to the deep mistrust that Russia's rapid expansion and cultural 'otherness' had engendered in the British imagination. During first half of the nineteenth century, with conflict on the horizon, British society was ripe for a rising tide of 'Russophobia', and John Howes Gleason goes so far as to say that in this period we see develop 'an antipathy toward Russia which soon became the most pronounced and enduring element in the national outlook on the world abroad'.²⁰ It is an antipathy which our millenarian writers were quick to take advantage of, and indeed its key elements are nicely summarized by David Pae (1828–1884) on the very first page of his anonymously published 1853 pamphlet *The Mission and Destiny of Russia*:

This power is comparatively of recent growth, and its elements are for the most part barbarous and multiform; yet it is regarded with fear by some, and

¹⁸ Reisenauer, "Tidings Out of the East", p. 144; Reisenauer finds even more millenarian speculation of this sort during the Great War (1914–1918) than during the Victorian period.

¹⁹ Reisenauer, "Tidings Out of the East", p. 144; he notes that the events do not always follow the same order.

²⁰ J. H. Gleason, *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain: a Study of the Interaction of Policy and Opinion* (Harvard Historical Studies 57; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 1; on more mainstream/secular British Russophobia see also Figes, *Crimea*, pp. 70–83, 147–51.

a certain instinctive dislike by the whole, of the powers of Europe. Its sudden, mushroom-like growth, its monstrous extension of population, and the energy and capacity of its government, have rendered it at once an object of suspicion and foreboding to the rest of the nations.²¹

In a Fast Sermon for the Crimean War preached in April 1854, George Pinhorn, a country vicar in Shropshire, took Ezekiel 38–39 as his text. The sermon begins with a reference to ‘the unprovoked aggression and despotism of the [Russian] sovereign, who makes religion the cloke [*sic*] to cover his schemes of wrong and ambition...’²² Pinhorn goes on in a detailed discussion of Ezekiel 38:4–7 to note the connection with the ostensible cause of the war. The text, which describes a great assembly of troops, seems to foretell:

that this tyrannical invader of his peaceful neighbour, would make every possible preparation... and that he would seem to stand in the relation of a guardian to them [cf. 34:7 AV]... Methinks you already begin to see peep forth, the Czar’s hollow pretext of the protection of the holy places, and of the rights of his coreligionists in Turkey and the holy land!²³

And Pae’s *Mission and Destiny of Russia* draws further analogies between Ezek 38:4 and the composition of the Tsar’s army:

Never was such a multiform and mixed force marshalled under one leader, or engaged in one enterprise... Well may Ezekiel describe them as a ‘cloud to cover the land’, and as horses and horsemen *clothed with all sorts of armour*, a great company, with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. The wild horses and barbarous hordes of Tartary, and the semi-savages of Moscovy, will mingle with the trim and gaudy uniforms of the west, and the majesty of European cavalry. The music of all nations will be blended into one shrill war-hoop, wilder and fiercer than was ever heard among Indian tribes.²⁴

Orlando Figes notes that the numerous European publications on the threat of Russia ‘had as much to do with the imagination of an Asiatic “other” threatening the liberties and civilization of Europe as with any real or perceived threat.’²⁵ These interpretations of Ezekiel also appear to

²¹ D. Pae, *The Mission and Destiny of Russia, as Delineated in Scripture Prophecy, by the Author of ‘the Coming Struggle’* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1853), p. 1.

²² G. Pinhorn, *The Russian Antichrist; or Latter-Day Invasion of Gog and Magog* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longman, 1854), p. 4.

²³ Pinhorn, *Russian Antichrist*, p. 7.

²⁴ Pae, *Mission and Destiny of Russia*, p. 17.

²⁵ Figes, *Crimea*, p. 70.

draw as much on such 'fears and fantasies' as on the actual details of the text. Nevertheless, there is little question that the identification of Gog with Russia enabled British readers to align the monstrous characteristics of the biblical figure with an already traditional caricature of vicious Russian imperialism.

The Merchants of Tarshish and British Imperial Power

If the Russian Gog was a fearsome threat, the logical question to follow was: 'Who will stand up to him and protect the peace-loving nations of the world?' For British writers on prophecy this coalesced with perhaps more important questions still; 'where is Britain to be found in Ezekiel's prophecies?' and, by extension, 'where will Britain be when the Final Battle comes?' For Lewis Mayer, writing in 1803 while Napoleon's invasion fleet was gathering on the other side of the Channel, Britain is the 'land of unwall'd villages' (Ezek 38:11) which Gog so covets.²⁶ But for mid-nineteenth-century millenarians one interpretation returns again and again. Britain and its empire are to be found in the 'merchants of Tarshish' of 38:13, who offer challenging words to Gog and his invading horde. So, for example, Pae's earlier pamphlet, *The Coming Struggle Among the Nations of the Earth*, trumpets:

'Sheba and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto him, Art thou come to take a spoil? Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey?' How emphatically does this language identify Britain as the noble and single-handed opponent of Gog the king of the North...²⁷

Despite the rhetoric, to see Britain as Tarshish offers something of a challenge, not least because all of our prophetic interpreters are broadly committed to a literal interpretation of the text. Rhos, Meshech and Tubal are quite literally Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk. The Russian Tsar is the literal descendant of these ancient peoples. Can the same be said for Britain and Tarshish? Some writers do claim that Britain is identical with the biblical Tarshish. This is the line taken in the anonymous 1842 publication *The*

²⁶ Mayer, *Bonaparte, the Emperor of the French*, p. 25.

²⁷ D. Pae, *The Coming Struggle Among the Nations of the Earth: Or, the Political Events of the Next Fifteen Years: Described in Accordance with Prophecies in Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Apocalypse; Shewing Also the Important Position Britain Will Occupy at the End of the Awful Conflict* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1853), pp. 25–26.

Kings of the East, which argues rather implausibly and at great length that the ancients obtained all their tin from British mines, and that the Celts of Cornwall and Wales have a Phoenician origin.²⁸ Such arguments, even made in prodigious detail, failed to persuade most of his fellow millenarians, since the majority view appears to be that no literal Tarshish remains in existence and that, in this very special case, the text must be understood not literally but typologically. William Chamberlain, perhaps the most scholarly of our interpreters, makes the case in his 600-page *National Restoration and Conversion of the Twelve Tribes of Israel*:

the name is used by Ezekiel, 'Tarshish, and all the young Lions thereof', not literally, as of any sons of Javan, but typically, of some people in the latter days, being, like the sons of Tarshish, celebrated for *maritime, colonizing, and mercantile ascendancy* [*italics mine*].²⁹

Once these crucial characteristics are introduced, then a careful reading of the various biblical references to Tarshish allows Chamberlain to reach the following conclusion:

Thus, then, we have traced, and, I believe, fairly and truthfully traced, six various interpretations of the prophetic, or typical, Tarshish; and the sum of them is this:—Tarshish, in Ezek. xxxviii. 13, means, The most renowned maritime, colonizing, commercial, warlike people of the latter days, celebrated for manufactures both in metals and fabrics for clothing, and eminently engrossing the commerce of the west and east of the world, descended from Japheth, and residing in the islands of the west—in Europe.³⁰

Only Britain, currently reaching the height of its commercial and imperial power, fits the bill. Moreover, Britain does not stand entirely alone: the mention of Sheba, Dedan and the 'young lions' points to the eastward extension of the British Empire, and especially to the East India Company.³¹ Moreover, the heraldic connection with the British lion meant that the 'young lions' came to encompass not only Britain's eastern possessions

²⁸ *The Kings of the East: An Exposition of the Prophecies Determining from Scripture and from History the Power for Whom the Mystical Euphrates Is Being 'Dried Up'* (London: Seeley & Burnside, 1842), pp. 239–76; Anael, *Gog and Magog*, p. 24.

²⁹ W. Chamberlain, *The National Restoration and Conversion of the Twelve Tribes of Israel: Or, Notes on Some Prophecies Believed to Relate to Those Two Great Events; and Intended to Show That the Conversion Will Take Place After the Restoration; and That the Occasion of It Has Been Uniformly Predicted* (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1854), p. 369; Cf. J. Cumming, *The End: Or, the Proximate Signs of the Close of This Dispensation* (London: John Farquhar Shaw, 5th Thousand, 1855), p. 269.

³⁰ Chamberlain, *National Restoration*, p. 377.

³¹ Pae, *Coming Struggle*, 24–25; Anael, *Gog and Magog*, p. 24.

but the wider family of British colonies (and former colonies) throughout the world.³²

Yet even once Britain is identified as the Tarshish of Ezekiel 38:13, what difference does this make? There is still a significant exegetical problem, since the Gog prophecy leaves little room for human agency in bringing about Israel's salvation. Gog is defeated by cosmic upheaval, miraculous confusion, and fire and brimstone (38:19–22): this is all of a piece with Ezekiel's typical theocentricity, and the people of Israel themselves have little to do but bury the bodies and burn weapons. As is clear from the tone of the preceding comments, however, our prophetic interpreters will not be satisfied to see Britain as merely a privileged nation of rubbish collectors and undertakers.

Britain's opposition to the Russian Gog is discovered in the challenging questions that Tarshish asks: 'Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?' For *The Kings of the East* the tone of the words implies a taunt, and the assembled nations are 'intimating by their sarcastic questions the futility of the attempt, the utter discomfiture of all [Gog's] plans.'³³ Yet it is far from obvious that the merchants' questions in 38:13 *do* represent a challenge, far less a commitment to armed struggle. Those commentators down the years who have had anything at all to say about the verse have tended to find the merchants of Tarshish and their fellows to be enthusiastic accomplices to Gog's rapine and pillage. In his recent commentary Daniel Block goes so far as to describe them as 'vultures hoping to take advantage of the spoils of this war', and earlier commentators such as Lowth and Fairbairn express the same view.³⁴

Some of our millenarians simply assert that the questions are challenging, but once again Walter Chamberlain comes to the rescue with a piece of detailed exegesis. For Chamberlain the question 'conveys the force of *indignant disapproval*'.³⁵ He is aware that his view is contrary to the usual one, and his argument depends on the affirmative style of question asked: the text does not say, 'art thou not come up?' to which

³² Reisenauer, '“Tidings Out of the East”', p. 156.

³³ *The Kings of the East*, p. 283.

³⁴ D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 449; Lowth, *A Commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel*, p. 314; Fairbairn, *Ezekiel*, p. 17 n. 2.

³⁵ Chamberlain, *National Restoration*, p. 234.

the expected answer would be 'yes thou art'. Rather it says 'art thou come up?', to which the implied answer is 'not with our consent'.³⁶ To support this contention he draws on the respected Hebrew grammarians Salomon Glassius (1593–1656) and Christian Noldius (1626–83), both of whom argue that the ה interrogative used in a positive question normally expects the answer no.³⁷ Noldius goes so far as to say that such use implies 'in addition to the question a mood of indignation, reproach or wonder'.³⁸ Chamberlain then concludes that 'Sheba, Dedan, and Tarshish are prophesied of as inquiring affirmatively of a fact accomplished, viz., of Gog's invasion of Palestine, "Are ye come up?" and by that mode of speech are made by Ezekiel to express their indignation that he has done so'.³⁹ Chamberlain seems to disregard Noldius' 'wonder', preferring to emphasize indignation and reproach, and he finds Noldius remiss for failing to draw attention to how prominent the form is in this particular prophet's writings. He claims 38 examples within Ezekiel 1–39, of which he details three negative questions (13:7; 18:25, 29) and four positive ones (20:3, 4, 30; 23:36). In these latter, he argues, 'an inquiry is made affirmatively of *undoubted facts*, and the answer implied is that of *strong reproof and indignation*', which implies that in 38:13 then 'Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish (whoever they may be) are no part of Gog's confederacy, but condemn it'.⁴⁰

Chamberlain's linguistic argument here is careful and even plausible, although it has hardly proved popular with subsequent commentators. It was a godsend for other millenarians less inclined to bury themselves in the details of Hebrew grammar. Dr Cumming, who praises Chamberlain as 'a most able writer on the subject', offers his own expansive paraphrase:

We will wait a little; we are not quite sure that you will be allowed to have your own way in this matter. We understand your policy, we see your project; we do not agree to it; we choose to oppose it; and we speak therefore in the language of defiant sarcasm. Art thou come to take a spoil? You will find

³⁶ Chamberlain, *National Restoration*, pp. 234–35.

³⁷ Thus Chamberlain, *National Restoration*, 235, quotes Glassius as follows: 'Observatur et hoc, quod ה interrogativum in interrogationibus affirmativis *neget*, in affirmativis *affirmet*' (from his *Philologia Sacra*, i, p. 560).

³⁸ Chamberlain applies the following observation, made in no. 1059 of the 'Annotationes et Vindicationes' which form an appendix to Noldius' larger work, the *Concordantiae Particularum Ebraico-Chaldaicarum*: 'Quando praeter interrogationem connotatur affectus indignantis, exprobrantis, vel admirantis, dicitur ה, הַתִּימָה, vel הַתִּמְיָה admirationis' (*National Restoration*, p. 236).

³⁹ Chamberlain, *National Restoration*, pp. 235–36. cf. GKC §150d 'a surprised or indignant refusal'.

⁴⁰ Chamberlain, *National Restoration*, p. 237.

it is not so easily done; for we mean to muster all our forces, whatever they may be and from whatever source they may come, to oppose, and resist, and repel you.⁴¹

This heartfelt conviction of Britain's active role in the Gog prophecy enables our prophetic interpreters to make a number of rhetorical moves, all of which tend to cut against the theocentric grain of Ezekiel's prophecy. In effect we see a collapsing of the distance between God's role and that of the British Empire, to such an extent that Britain almost eclipses God as the agent of millennial harmony. While these prophetic writers share some of the pessimism about the current state of the world common to all premillennial thinking, they are also patriots and they inherit a set of common cultural assumptions that Britain's imperial success is the result of divine favour and a reward for faithfulness.⁴² This common notion of the providential nature of British power reaches an almost ludicrous extreme in *'The Kings of the East'*, which offers a wealth of statistics 'based on government sources', and describing Britain's favourable population growth, life expectancy, mining productivity, trade volumes, and so on, concluding that:

... since mankind were first placed upon the earth, history has not recorded in the annals of any nation, a period, when wealth was accumulated so rapidly, and civilization advanced successfully, as in our own country since the commencement of the present peace.⁴³

For the author of *'The Kings of the East'*, Britain is not to be merely the passive recipient of this divine blessing but is especially called to work with God in the task of judgement, which should 'encourage our fleets and armies, and nerve the nation to undertake the work when called upon, with full assurance of victory.'⁴⁴ Moreover, Pae's *Coming Struggle* is striking in the way that it blurs the distinction between imperial, commercial and theological motives. Britain's resistance to the Russian threat may appear to be for secular reasons, but these are not paramount:

To preserve the East Indian market, and keep the path open to it, Britain will strive much and do much; but while her rulers may think that they are merely serving the nation they are really accomplishing one of the grand

⁴¹ Cumming, *The End*, p. 269.

⁴² See, e.g., S. Brown, *Providence and Empire: Religion, Politics and Society in Britain and Ireland, 1815–1914* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2008).

⁴³ *'The Kings of the East'*, p. 50.

⁴⁴ *'The Kings of the East'*, p. 55.

designs of God and evolving events, while they cause her to take measures for the preservation of this distant part of her Empire, will really and only produce occurrences which will facilitate the great design of Jehovah...⁴⁵

The expectation that the Jews would return to Palestine was a staple of eschatological speculation in this period, and Pae again aligns millenarian and strategic considerations by arguing that the placing of a Jewish colony in Palestine may seem to secular minds the only way to keep the path to India open.⁴⁶

The coincidence of theological reflection and practical politics only increased once hostilities with Russia had actually begun in late 1853. For George Pinhorn, preaching in rural Shropshire, the appeal to prophecy resolves the moral and religious difficulty of Christian Britain fighting alongside Muslim Turkey against Christian Russia: 'it is appropriate to ally with Muslim Turkey if it is to fulfil the word of prophecy'.⁴⁷ The popular preacher Dr John Cumming's 1855 summary of prophecy, *The End*, is marginally more guarded in its sabre-rattling conclusion. Even if Russian aggression is part of God's plan it is still wicked, and requires a response:

Our resistance of this aggression, on the supposition that Tarshish is the typical country indicating our own, is right in the light of duty, and it is indicated in the light of prophecy. I would not say that we ought to go and oppose the Russian aggression, because God has predicted that Tarshish shall do so; but I hold that in commencing this war—terrible as it is, unspeakably terrible—we were right; it was in the sight of God inevitably our duty. I have no sympathy therefore with those who think that war is and can be never a nation's duty.⁴⁸

And being on the right side in the final battle is not without its benefits. Cumming is confident that even if the end 'success rests with God', Britons will be rewarded for doing their duty:

In doing the right as a nation we are securing immunity for ourselves. When the clouds of wrath charged with righteous retribution shall sweep with impetuous career through the sky of broad Europe, it is a delightful thought that the homes and the hearths of your children, if not of yourselves, will

⁴⁵ Pae, *Coming Struggle*, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Pae, *Coming Struggle*, p. 22. Cf. Cumming, *The End*, pp. 282–83. For other examples of this alignment between millenarian and political concerns see E. Bar-Yosef, 'Christian Zionism and Victorian Culture', *Israel Studies* 8 (2003), pp. 18–44.

⁴⁷ Pinhorn, *Russian Antichrist*, p. 15. Figes notes that the 'issue of defending the Muslim Turks against the Christian Russians represented a major obstacle for Anglican Conservatives' (*Crimea*, p. 150).

⁴⁸ Cumming, *The End*, p. 280.

be sheltered by what our brave ones have endured and our gallant ones have done; and all because they did their duty, and our nation accepted its responsibility, and took its place in this great war.⁴⁹

Pae's *Coming Struggle* is even more expansive about Britain's place in the new divine order after the final battle. Britain will be one of very few nations to emerge with its identity intact and, what is more:

It is very natural to suppose that Britain will continue to hold a high place among the nations, on account of the noble and important mission she will have fulfilled, though what that position will be, or how long she will retain it, it is impossible to say. The Anglo-Saxon race must, from the very nature of their constitution, be the leading people, and will probably continue unrivalled in intellectual greatness.⁵⁰

And in fact, even though we are to expect a restored and glorious Jewish kingdom, this will not take away Britain's preeminent place among the nations:

but it is evident the Hebrews will have the chief place during that glorious era which these stirring changes are to usher in. They will become *officially* greater than any of the other nations, and that in virtue of their covenant agreement with Jehovah, but that appears to be the extent of their privilege.⁵¹

Moreover, as the emphasis turns to America as Britain's partner, the tone shifts from British imperialism to a simpler Anglo-Saxon racial superiority:

In point of intellectual attainments, the Jewish race can never soar above the Saxon mind, and therefore they can never become morally greater than Britain or America. These two countries, especially the latter, will continue to move forward the chariot wheels of the world's progression, and carry the human soul through endless stages of development, till the highest point of its earthly compass is reached, and the wider sphere and nobler pursuits of eternity shall unfold themselves.⁵²

We must be very careful before equating premillennial restorationism with any genuine enthusiasm for the Jewish people: Jewish restoration to

⁴⁹ Cumming, *The End*, p. 282.

⁵⁰ Pae, *Coming Struggle*, p. 28.

⁵¹ Pae, *Coming Struggle*, p. 28.

⁵² Pae, *Coming Struggle*, p. 28.

Palestine may be what Pae calls 'the very keystone to the whole political structure of the world', but it is far from the climax.⁵³

Reading Gog in Victorian Culture

The claims made in these books, sermons and pamphlets may seem outlandish to modern ears, and indeed they were never exactly mainstream in their own day. Eitan Bar-Yosef, in a 2003 study entitled 'Christian Zionism and Victorian Culture', makes a compelling case that despite the prevalence of millenarian beliefs and their elite origins, the cause of Jewish restoration was always seen as eccentric or marginal by the Victorian political mainstream.⁵⁴ This is true as far as it goes: Britain did not suddenly start laying on ships to ferry Jews to Palestine, and millenarian thinking clearly had little direct impact on foreign policy. However, I think it would be mistake to measure the influence of these works solely in terms of proto-Zionist policy. The authors of these tracts were often men of considerable authority and influence, at least within their own evangelical circles. They were well-known voices and a great number of people heard or read their words. For example, Dr Cumming's sermons were extremely well attended, and while Pae was a popular novelist who became the first editor of the hugely successful Scottish periodical, *The People's Friend*. His *Coming Struggle* was clearly designed have as wide an audience as possible: he was not averse to using the tactics of the novelist or even showman to get his message across, and it is possible that the pamphlet sold as many as 200,000 copies. Millenarian books and pamphlets were reviewed in the more mainstream press, even if only to discount their methods and conclusions. At the end of a scathing review of Pae's *Mission and Destiny of Russia* the *Athenaeum*'s reviewer tellingly asks:

Why do we re-produce these absurdities? For this reason:—they are read by thousands and thousands of the curious, the credulous, and the ignorant. We desire that those who have charge of public opinion, who are in some degree responsible for the straying of the multitude, should see how far religious feeling is abused by those who ought to know better.⁵⁵

Even in 1864 the impact of *The Coming Struggle* had not been forgotten, and the prospect of a sixth sequel prompted an editorial in the London

⁵³ Pae, *Coming Struggle*, p. 10; cf. Bar-Yosef, 'Christian Zionism and Victorian Culture'.

⁵⁴ Bar-Yosef, 'Christian Zionism and Victorian Culture'.

⁵⁵ 'The War in the East', *The Athenaeum*, 1375 (4 March 1854), p. 275.

Standard newspaper to fulminate against this kind of writing, and its greedy and fraudulent authors:

The prophets of the present age are surely a degenerate race... They stoop to Grub Street and sell their mystic rolls at sixpence a copy. What is worse than all, when we have paid our money we seem to fail in getting the genuine article. We look into the prophetic peep-show—or what the writer is pleased to call ‘the telescope of divine prediction’—and all we can distinctly make out is a publisher’s shop, with the awful seer in the back parlour ‘a-counting out the money.’⁵⁶

The popularity of tracts like *The Coming Struggle* may have caused mainstream reviewers like these to despair, but there can be no doubt that there was a genuine market for apocalyptic speculation, and that the millenarian writers and preachers did provide a biblical and hence traditional framework through which their numerous readers could make sense of an increasingly threatening and uncertain world. The literary critic Mary Carpenter has written of a prophetic ‘consumer culture’ from the 1820s to the 1870s, in which the Apocalypse ‘was packaged not only in terms of current events in recent history, but as a promotion of British national identity with its religious and racial exclusions’.⁵⁷ If this is true of the interpretation of the book of Revelation, it is most certainly true of Ezekiel as well. It is precisely what we have seen as our millenarian writers move on to draw out the moral and political implications of their exegesis, and use their biblical interpretation to repackage both current fears about Russian expansion and deeply held stereotypes of the nature of Russian imperial power.

In Victorian England it did not take a great stretch of imagination to see Gog as Russia. Where our millenarians are more inventive is in the way they manage to bring the merchants of Tarshish from the margins of Ezekiel’s prophecy into the centre of British imperial discourse. According to David Armitage, by the mid-eighteenth century a conception had taken root in which ‘the British Empire was, above and beyond all such politics, Protestant, commercial, maritime and free.’⁵⁸ These are precisely

⁵⁶ ‘Eleven Years Ago...’, *The Standard* (23 August 1864), p. 4.

⁵⁷ M. W. Carpenter, *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies: Women, Sexuality, and Religion in the Victorian Market* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), p. 131.

⁵⁸ D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 8.

the characteristics of British Tarshish in these tracts and sermons, and they are given further emphasis by the contrast with Gog and his Empire. Russia/Gog is not Protestant, but exotically Orthodox. Russia's empire is not founded on free trade, but on the desire to seize spoil and carry off plunder, and the Russian Gog requires ever more and more land to conquer. Russia's system of government is not free and Parliamentary: rather the Tsar is 'the Autocrat', feared and worshipped in equal measure by his subjects. In this way, the monstrous Gog is used to underline the 'otherness' of the Russian empire and at the same time the traditional virtues of British rule. And yet there is a deep irony here, since by the 1850s the days when Britain's Empire was 'free and commercial' are long gone (if they ever existed). We are well into the second phase of British imperialism, marked especially in India and Africa by 'military conquest, racial subjugation, economic exploitation and territorial expansion'.⁵⁹ In presenting the disparity between Russian and British power in such stark, even mythological terms, the interpreters of prophecy leave no room for a critique of Britain's empire, whose politics so miraculously align with those of Jehovah. The exegetical creativity and powerful rhetoric of men like Chamberlain, Cumming, and Pae serve to disguise the actual state of affairs. For in reality their beloved 'merchants of Tarshish' may have been standing too close to Block's 'vultures' for comfort, and they could just as well have asked the question 'Art thou come to take spoil?' of their own British nation and its imperial ambitions.

⁵⁹ Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, p. 3.

THE 'JERUSALEMANGERS' AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF
RESISTANCE AGAINST THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND NINETEENTH
CENTURY BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA¹

Hendrik Bosman

The religious history of the British Empire is a comparatively new field of research and not without controversy.² Although most recent overviews of South African history still tend to emphasize the economic and political aspects thereof, more attention is warranted for the cultural influences in general and the role of religion in particular—with at least some emphasis on the effects of the interpretation of the Bible on the history of Southern Africa.³

Who were the 'Jerusalemangers'?⁴ Were they sectarian zealots with a sadly-lacking knowledge of geography?⁵ Were they archetypal members

¹ It is important to distinguish between 'South Africa' and 'Southern Africa'. 'South Africa' is an independent state that existed from 1910 as the 'Union of South Africa' and from 1961 as the 'Republic of South Africa'. 'Southern Africa' refers to a region that eventually included several states, besides South Africa. There was no independent state known as 'South Africa' in the middle of the nineteenth century Southern Africa. Since the *Jerusalemangers* were active during the middle of the nineteenth century, 'Southern Africa' seems to an appropriate term to be utilized during this period of time.

² Hilary M. Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. vii–xii.

³ Pieter De Klerk, 'Die periodisering van Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis in resente oorsigwerke,' *Historia* 56 (2011), pp. 151–52.

⁴ The *Jerusalemangers* were small group of *Voortrekkers* who were so disenchanted with the British government in the Cape Province during the second third of the nineteenth century that they were set on travelling as far as Jerusalem, without realizing the vast distances involved. Although the *Jerusalemangers* took part in the Great Trek from the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony into the interior of Southern Africa, they were not representative of the *Voortrekkers* as a whole. It is uncertain how many *Jerusalemangers* there in fact were, but it seems unlikely that there were more than one hundred out of almost 20,000 who took part in the Great Trek (1836–1838). Traces of the presence of the *Jerusalemangers* can be found in Natal in the early 1840's; after the British occupation of Natal they move to the Free State in the middle 1840's. When the British seem to be closing in on the Free State, the *Jerusalemangers* moved further north and settled in the remote Marico district of the Transvaal. Still not content, they made their final move in the early 1850s, when they decided to trek north until they reached Jerusalem, but a malaria epidemic brought their northbound 'exodus' to a tragic conclusion: most of them died of fever in March 1852. More information about them is provided in the next paragraph.

⁵ Philip B. Van der Watt, *Karakters uit ons kerklike verlede* (Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1976), p. 25.

of the *Voortrekkers*, who blazed a trail into the interior of Southern Africa, depending on their Bibles for guidance in all walks of life, firmly gripping front-loading rifles in rugged fists, confident that they had a divinely-planned destiny to fulfil?⁶ Or might this article just be a slightly embarrassing example of historical research attempting to make little fish speak like whales (as Oliver Goldsmith said of Samuel Johnson).⁷

Between 1838 and 1852 a group of former *Voortrekkers* (often referred to as the '*Jerusalemgangers*' or loosely translated as 'Jerusalem travellers') under the leadership of Johan Adam (Jan) Enslin set out to travel all the way to Jerusalem using the map at the back of the Dutch State Bible translation ('*Statenvertaling*'). Although the name of the group suggests an obvious association with ancient Israel, travelling towards the Promised Land, this article will argue that one of the prime reasons for their intended journey to Jerusalem was to get away from 'England's overwhelming power' ('*Engelands overmacht*').⁸ This view, that the *Jerusalemgangers* phenomenon was a manifestation of strong anti-imperial sentiments, is corroborated by a number of incidents to be discussed below: Enslin's speech in the *Volksraad* on May 4, 1850, which referred to England as the 'oppressor' ('*verdrukker*'); the attempted stoning of a visiting minister from the Cape Province (Andrew Murray, Jr.) because he was considered to be too British; the reference to England as one of the ten horns mentioned in Rev 17:12 (relating it to the Anti-Christ), etc. In light of this evidence, the stereotyping that the *Voortrekkers* and their immediate

⁶ Jan C. Visagie, *Voortrekkerstamouers 1835–1845* (Pretoria: UNISA, 2000) x claims that there is agreement amongst historians that between 1835 and 1845 about 20,000 inhabitants of the Cape Colony (most of them Cape Dutch speaking farmers) moved into the interior of Southern Africa and that they are collectively referred to as *Voortrekkers*. The name "Voortrekkers" can be loosely translated as "those who first started travelling" or "those who travelled in front". Several reasons can be given for this "trek" into the interior of Southern Africa: lack of protection against cattle raids on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony, inadequate compensation for the release of the slaves in 1833 and a growing need to establish political independence. Norman Etherington, *The Great Treks: The transformation of Southern Africa 1815–1854* (London: Longman, 2001), p. 344 criticized the romantic representation of the *Voortrekkers* in the *Voortrekker* monument near Pretoria: 'The Voortrekkers, immaculately groomed and dressed, leave the Cape Colony with hers and fancy Bibles.'

⁷ James Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (London: Oxford University Press, 1791, repr. 1970).

⁸ Frans Lion Cachet, *De worstelstrijd der Transvalers: Aan het volk van Nederland verhaald* (Amsterdam: Kruyt, 1882) p. 377.

descendents as a whole considered themselves a chosen people will be challenged.⁹

The British authorities in nineteenth-century Southern Africa viewed Christian churches as an important part of the process of colonization and therefore one can hardly separate a discussion of resistance against the British Empire from a discussion of the interpretation of the Bible.¹⁰ This contribution argues that the small group of *Jerusalemgangers* intended to journey all the way to Jerusalem to get away from British Imperialism and that their interpretation of the Bible reflects their resistance against the British Empire.

*Resistance against the British Empire during
the Nineteenth Century*

In his political and economical study of imperialism in South Africa, De Kiewiet adamantly claimed that Southern Africa was the part of the British Empire where imperialism made the biggest impact.¹¹

The effect of British imperialism on the Southern African society was both positive and negative. Before one undertakes a discussion of the *Jerusalemgangers* as an example of resistance against imperialism, one should acknowledge those who viewed it as beneficial. William Shaw, for example, a nineteenth century missionary, described the advantages of British rule in Southern Africa 'like a majestic tree spreading forth its branches far and wide, and thus affording shelter under which white and black ... may repose in peace, safety and enjoyment.'¹²

⁹ Johan Degenaar, 'The Church and Nationalism in South Africa,' in Theo Sundermeier (ed.), *Church and Nationalism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975), p. 24 compiled the following list of countries where some form of 'myth of the chosen people' were developed: France, Germany, Italy, Russia, United States of America etc. Lion Cachet, *De worstelstrijd der Transvalers*, 377 n. 1. cautioned those who made fun of the *Jerusalemgangers* to take note of their resolute confidence that they were similar to Israel which was saved despite the overwhelming power of the Egyptians. In the same footnote Lion Cachet allows a comparison between Israel and the exodus from Egypt and the *Voortrekkers* who left the Cape Colony, due to perceived oppression by England.

¹⁰ Rodney Davenport, 'Settlement, Conquest and Theological Controversy: The Churches of Nineteenth Century South Africa', in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (ed. R. Elphick and R. Davenport; Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), p. 51.

¹¹ Cornelius W. De Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor in South Africa: A Study in Politics and Economics* (Cape Town: Frank Cass, 1965), p. 10.

¹² Davenport, 'Settlement, Conquest and Theological Controversy,' 62.

One may also identify individuals who responded both positively and negatively to British imperialism as manifest in the gradual colonization of Southern Africa. In 1864, the well known Old Testament scholar Bishop J. W. Colenso of Natal compared the British Empire to the Roman Empire and came to the conclusion that it surpassed 'the empire of ancient Rome in the days of its grandeur' and portrayed it as being an example of 'God's Providence working to Christianise the world'. Less than three decades later, in 1879, the same Bishop Colenso condemned the Zulu War and demanded that their king Cetshwayo be restored to his throne.¹³

To gain some comprehension of why the *Jerusalem* gangers responded so vehemently to the imperialism of the British Empire in nineteenth-century Southern Africa, one must take note of the factors that fashioned the Cape Dutch (Afrikaner) community during the eighteenth century, when the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) still ruled the roost in the Cape Province. Van Jaarsveld identifies three constitutive factors: First, the DEIC's main concern was profit and their trade policy was autocratic and unsympathetic towards any other goal; this alienated those who lived on the frontier of the colonial society.¹⁴ Second, Calvinist doctrine played an important role in nurturing principles of individualism and the urge to be free and independent of authority.¹⁵ Third, the geographical position of the colony, which had evolved from a refreshment station at the southern tip of Africa, made detachment and separation fundamental characteristics of this frontier society: 'These people acquired strong traits of independence, dexterity, stubbornness, resoluteness against force and love of freedom'.¹⁶

These individual traits did not, however, translate into the 'growth and development of national self assertion' amongst Afrikaners in the Cape

¹³ Norman Etherington, 'Kingdoms of this world and the next: Christian beginnings among Zulu and Swazi', in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*, eds. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), pp. 84–95, 105.

¹⁴ The British authorities therefore 'inherited' from the DEIC a group of disgruntled settlers on the eastern frontier of what eventually became the Cape Colony under British rule.

¹⁵ The influence of Calvinism on members of the frontier society can not be explained by the impact of British imperialism. It does, however, suggest why there was such strong reaction against what was perceived to be autocratic decisions made by the British government.

¹⁶ Floris A. van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism (1868–1881)* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1961), pp. 9–11.

Province; this was not a cause of the 'Great Trek', but a result thereof.¹⁷ This 'national self assertion' took a long time to develop and the Boer emigrant community north of the Vaal River was characterized in the middle of the nineteenth century by numerous factions, which did not share a common national loyalty.¹⁸

Examples of resistance against perceived British imperialism will now be gleaned from the eventful life of Jan Enslin, who eventually became the leader of the *Jerusalemangers*. He was born in 1800 in the district of Cradock and married to Anna Susanna Coetzer, with whom he had nine children, in 1825. As a farmer he was exposed to the conflict with the Xhosa on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony and, in *The Graham's Town Journal* of November 2, 1837, he is mentioned as one of a group of *Voortrekkers* who left the district to travel into the interior of Southern Africa.¹⁹ It would seem that Enslin took up trading while moving north; being far away from any settled congregation or church, some of his children were only baptized three years after their birth.

After a short spell in Natal Enslin relocated to Winburg, in what eventually became the Free State. There he became known as the 'Prophet' and one of the leaders of the so-called 'Patriots', as opposed to those who were loyal to the British crown.²⁰ In letters to Governor Maitland in 1846 and 1847, the British resident representative Major H. D. Warden described the conflict between the Patriots and the Loyalists and came to the conclusion that 'the majority of the farmers in the country... are anxious to live in peace and under British protection'; nevertheless, he was also convinced 'that there is a large sprinkling of very disaffected characters through the whole country.' This 'disaffection' towards the British government grew and, later in 1847, Warden wrote to R. Moosman that there were

¹⁷ Van Jaarsveld, *Afrikaner Nationalism*, 21. According to van Jaarsveld the term 'Great Trek' was first used in 1842 in English sources to express the extent of the migration in terms of numbers and not to indicate its historical significance. The term '*Groote Trek*' was only used in Dutch documents from the 1870's. Floris A. van Jaarsveld, *Lewende Verlede* (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers & Boekhandel, 1961), pp. 191–92.

¹⁸ Jane Carruthers, 'Friedrich Jeppe: Mapping the Transvaal c. 1850–1899', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29 (2003), pp. 955–75 (956).

¹⁹ Johannes P. Claassen, *Die Jerusalemangers, met spesifieke verwysing na J. A. Enslin* (Silverton: Promedia, 1981), pp. 13–14.

²⁰ Bouke Spoelstra, *Die 'Doppers' in Suid-Afrika 1760–1899* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1963), p. 115.

many of those whom he depicted as the 'evil disposed Emigrants' that 'will rather loose all they possess than behinder any kind of British rule.'²¹

On August 29, 1848, British troops under the command of Sir Harry Smith defeated a commando led by Andries Pretorius at Boomplaats, close to Winburg. The defeat emphasised British influence in the region and prompted many Afrikaner farmers to leave the Free State and move across the Vaal River. Jan Enslin was one of these farmers who decided to resettle in the remote but fertile Marico (called Madikwe by the local Tswana population). Enslin called his first farm '*Vergenoeg*' ('Far enough'), because he was apparently under the impression that it was 'far enough' from British influence.²² Enslin also referred to the farm as 'Meshech'; this is discussed below.

Soon Enslin was elected as a member of the Transvaal *Volksraad* or parliament. On April 19, 1850, he complained about British travellers who journeyed through the country without asking any permission to do so and requested that the *Volksraad* put a hundred men under his command to establish some form of control with regards to hunters, traders and adventurers that travelled through the Transvaal with little or no respect for the local authorities.²³ Later in 1850, several British travellers in the Transvaal were arrested and fined for not obtaining permission to travel through the area. When a French missionary, Fredoux, was treated in a similar fashion, one newspaper in the Free State described this policy as 'highway robbery'.²⁴

Browsing through the minutes of the *Volksraad* between 1850 to 1851, one finds numerous references to comments made by Enslin but that are not pertinent for this discussion; he suggested drastic measures to 'discipline' Chief Segeli of the Tswana and also had frequent disagreements with other leaders, such as Andries Pretorius (the commander at Blood River) and the magistrate H. S. Lombard, both of whom he accused of plotting with the British.²⁵

In January 1851 the *Volksraad* of the Transvaal could not reach a consensus regarding whom to elect as commandant general. Due to unrest amongst several of the local tribes as well as the divisive existence of rival

²¹ Tinie M. C. E. van Schoor, 'Politieke Groeperinge in Transgariep', *Archives Year Book for South African History* 13 / II (1950), pp. 23, 26.

²² Claasen, *Jerusalem-gangers*, 19–22.

²³ *South African Archives, Transvaal No. 1: Minutes of the Volksraad* April 19 (1850), p. 296.

²⁴ *The Friend of the Sovereignty* 8 and 29 July 1850.

²⁵ Claasen, *Jerusalem-gangers*, 23–25.

Boer factions, it was decided to elect no less than four commandant generals, and Enslin was elected as commandant general for Marico.²⁶ Despite his sectarian religious and theological beliefs, this indicates that Enslin still commanded enough respect to be elected in a position of leadership.

Around the same time there was also a heated and protracted dispute about the border of the Transvaal and the Free State or Orange River Sovereignty, as the British claimed that they had judicial authority up to the twenty-fifth parallel. On January 17, 1852, Andries Pretorius and the British signed the Sand River Convention in which it was stipulated that the Vaal River was the border, not the twenty-fifth parallel. It is reported that Enslin was so furious that he declared that there would be many widows and orphans as a result of the signing of the convention.²⁷ To his credit, it must be mentioned that at a later stage, shortly before his death, he retracted this statement as having been foolish.²⁸

Enslin and the *Jerusalemangers* were alarmed by the Sand River Convention that seem indicate that the British Empire was gradually encroaching on the political sovereignty of the Transvaal. Approximately 50 of them resumed their journey in February 1852 to reach Jerusalem. While travelling to the north, their leader (Enslin) and the majority of the *Jerusalemangers* died during a malaria or yellow fever epidemic in April 1852.²⁹ The final reference to Enslin in *The Friend of the Sovereignty* of May 15, 1852, referred to 'John Ensil (*sic*), a famous fanatic, who supposed the Boers were in the wilderness and on the road to Jerusalem'. According to Chapman, no less than 36 family members died of the fever before Enslin himself passed away, with his last words being 'I intended to make widows and orphans, but now God has made them.'³⁰ An article in *The Graham's Town Journal* of June 12, 1852 came to the ironical conclusion that the only trek made by the *Jerusalemangers* was 'the trekking from fear of the plague' when they left the Marico in the wake of the terrible malaria epidemic. Most of the few survivors who moved out of the Marico

²⁶ Stephanus P. Engelbrecht, *Geskiedenis van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (Cape Town: de Bussy, 1953), p. 92 n. 1.

²⁷ *The Friend of the Sovereignty*, May 29, 1852.

²⁸ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, June 10, 1852.

²⁹ Claasen, *Jerusalemangers*, 32.

³⁰ James Chapman, *Travels Into the Interior of South Africa 1849–1863: Hunting and Travel Journeys: From Natal to Walvis Bay & Visits to Lake Ngami & Victoria Falls, Part 1* (South African Biographical and Historical Studies 10; Cape Town: Balkema, 1971), pp. 34–35. There is simply not enough evidence available to provide a definite reason why Enslin changed his mind. It is probable that the death of his family and friends led to some soul searching and the acknowledgment of his own *hubris*.

eventually became members of the theologically conservative Reformed Church (also called *Doppers*), which was established in 1859.³¹ Some of the fleeing *Jerusalem* gangers roamed the area to the north of Pretoria; when they reached the Mogalekwena River it was in flood, flowing to the north and full of (Nile) crocodiles, and they accordingly mistook it for the Nile River.³²

It was very difficult to find maps of the territory north of the Vaal River around the 1850s and could have been one of the reasons why the *Jerusalem* gangers had to make do with a map in their Dutch Bible for the journey to the north. One possible reason for this dearth of maps was the suspicion that maps enabled the British government to plan colonisation so as to encircle the part of Southern Africa not yet under British control; according to Carruthers, the explorer Thomas Baines was detained in 1850 'at Potchefstroom and forbidden to make maps or sketches'.³³

One should also keep in mind that, about twenty five years after the demise of the *Jerusalem* gangers, approximately six hundred conservative Afrikaner farmers decided to leave the Transvaal, due to the policies introduced by the then-president T. F. Burgers, and journey through the Kalahari desert with the aim of settling in Angola. Commentators who have studied this foolhardy 'Thirstland Trek' often refer to an underlying and pervasive 'moving spirit of trek'.³⁴ This kind of restlessness, correlated to a willingness to embark on ill-conceived journeys, should also be taken into account when reflecting on the *Jerusalem* gangers as a protest against British imperialism.³⁵ Indeed, several of the surviving *Jerusalem* gangers and their descendants took part in the Thirstland Trek—who eventually moved from Angola to Southwest Africa and then back again to South Africa.³⁶

³¹ Engelbrecht, *Geschiedenis*, 65.

³² Claasen, *Jerusalem* gangers, 81. The naming of 'Nylstroom' was not simply done because of a certain affinity for the Bible. It is clear that the flooding of the Mogalekwena river (a river that has the biggest grass flood plain in the whole of South Africa), as well as the presence of ('Nile') crocodiles were the primary reasons for giving this river a Biblical name. There are many towns in Southern Africa that have biblical names (from Bethlehem to Pniël etc.)

³³ Carruthers, 'Mapping the Transvaal', 959.

³⁴ Willem A. De Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa: A Story of Afrikanerdom* (Durban: Bok Books International, 1988), p. 62.

³⁵ There was a saying amongst my own family members who took part in the Great Trek as well as the Thirstland Trek: "it is time to move on when you can see the smoke of your neighbour's chimney!"

³⁶ Lion Cachet, *De worstelstrijd der Tranvalers*, 377 note 1. One should also keep in mind that several migrations took place in Southern Africa during the middle and late nine-

Nineteenth-century Bible Interpretation in South Africa

The depiction of the Great Trek as an 'exodus' can be found in several novels written during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. According to Frederick Hale, the trend to merge the *Voortrekkers* with the Old Testament Israelites can be traced back to Frans Lion Cachet (*De worstelstrijd der Transvalers*, 1882) and J. Hendrik van Balen (*De Landverhuizers*, 1887), but reached a climax with the publication of *De Voortrekkers of Het Dagboek van Izak van der Merwe* in 1893 by two Dutch Reformed ministers, John D. Kestell and Nico Hofmeyr.³⁷ However, one cannot take for granted that the *Jerusalemgangers* understood the Great Trek in a similar manner forty years earlier and therefore careful attention for the hermeneutical context during the middle of the nineteenth century is required.

The Biblical interpretation of the *Voortrekkers* forms an important backdrop to attempts to engage with the hermeneutics of the *Jerusalemgangers*, despite the fact that the evidence about the group is fragmentary and allows for diverging explanations. One may identify various major arguments in Southern African historiography with regards to the role of religion in the 'Great Trek' (1836–1838). The importance of the Great Trek was initially linked to its supposed contribution to the expansion of Christianity and Western civilization in Southern Africa.³⁸ Gradually, a paradigm developed according to which primitive Calvinism in the nineteenth century gave rise to a sense of divine calling and mission amongst

teenth century: the Griqua trek under Adam Kok from Philopolis in the Free State across the Drakensberg Mountains to Kokstad in Natal; as well as the 'Nama exodus' under Hendrik Witbooi in German South West Africa (now Namibia).

³⁷ Lion Cachet, *De worstelstrijd der Transvalers* (Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt; Paarl. Zuid-Afrika: D. F. Du Toit & Co., 1882); J. Hendrik van Balen, *De landverhuizers, de Groote 'Trek' der Kaapsche Boeren 1836–1840* (Tiel: H. C. A. Campgne & Zoon, 1887); John D. Kestell and Nico Hofmeyr, *De Voortrekkers; of, Het Dagboek van Izak van der Merwe: een verhaal vir jongelieden* (Amsterdam: Hoveker & Wormser, 1898). Frederick Hale, 'The Great Trek as Exodus in J. D. Kestell's and N. Hofmeyr's *De Voortrekkers Of Het Dagboek van Izak van der Merwe*', *Acta Theologica* (2003), pp. 54–57, 68–69, makes the interesting observation that when Nico Hofmeyr reworked the 1898 publication in 1925 as an Afrikaans historical novel, Fanie, the number of Biblical allusions were reduced and the Exodus motif was used less often. Nico Hofmeyr, *Fanie: 'n Storie van vriendskap en liefde en awonture met 'n stukkie gouddraad saamgeveg* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1925).

³⁸ George M. Theal, *History of the Boers in South Africa or the Wanderings and Wars of the Emigrant Farmers from their Leaving of the Cape Colony to the Acknowledgement of their Independence by Great Britain* (London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Lowrey, 1887); Manfred Nathan, *The Voortrekkers of South Africa: from the Earliest Times to the Foundation of the Republics* ([Johannesburg]: Central News Agency; London: Gordon and Gitch, 1937).

the *Voortrekkers* and their descendents. At first, the idea of a 'primitive Calvinism' formed part of a liberal historiography which considered religious isolation to be one of the prime causes of a 'frontier tradition' in nineteenth century Southern Africa.³⁹ Eventually, this trend was developed by English and Afrikaans historians and popularized by novelists, locally and abroad.⁴⁰ However, the existence and pervasive influence of 'primitive Calvinism' in nineteenth century Southern Africa, as well as the central place of the Bible in general and the Old Testament in particular, have been seriously challenged by recent research on the primary documents of that period. 'Primitive Afrikaner Calvinism' as the major interpretive key to nineteenth century Southern African history has been depicted in this research as a 'historical myth' that was the much later product of a twentieth century ideology amongst Afrikaner elite attempting to 'ensure social cohesion in transitional times.'⁴¹

Some consensus has been reached in the conclusion that the *Voortrekkers* were 'a typical frontier society where folk religion flourished in a climate of relative religious isolation.'⁴² Many historians have pondered the extent of religious motivation for the Great Trek and, although most would accept some religious reasons for the *Voortrekkers* moving into the interior of Southern Africa, one is well advised not to assume a general association with Israel; only a few considered their trek to be an 'exodus', with Jerusalem as the ultimate goal.⁴³

Indeed, the assumption that Calvinism was a cornerstone of *Voortrekker* society has met with strong challenges. The American missionary Daniel Lindley, who was sympathetic towards the *Voortrekkers* and appreciated by them, described the *Voortrekkers* as follows: 'in most of their houses

³⁹ Eric A. Walker, *The Great Trek* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1934); Cornelius W. De Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa: Social and Economic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941).

⁴⁰ Sheila Patterson, *The Last Trek: A Study of the Boer People and the Afrikaner Nation* (London: ABC, 1957); van Jaarsveld, *Lewende Verlede*, 228–58; De Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa*, 21–40; and James Michener, *The Covenant* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1980).

⁴¹ André Du Toit, 'No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology', *American Historical Review* 88 (1983), pp. 920–52, (952); André Du Toit, 'Captive to the Nationalist Paradigm: Prof F. A. van Jaarsveld and the Historical Evidence for the Afrikaner's Ideas on his Calling and Mission', *South African Historical Journal* 16 (1984), pp. 49–80; André Du Toit, 'Puritans in Africa? Afrikaner "Calvinism" and Kuyperian Neo-Calvinism in Late Nineteenth-Century South Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27 (1985), pp. 209–40.

⁴² Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, 'The Spread of Christianity Among Whites and Blacks in Transorangia', in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (ed. R. Ephick and R. Davenport; Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), pp. 121–34 (123).

⁴³ Gustav B. A. Gerdener, *Ons Kerk in die Transgariep: Geskiedenis van die Ned. Geref. Kerke in Natal, Vrystaat en Transvaal* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1934), pp. 4–5, 67.

you will find a Bible ... But this good book is, with a few exceptions, little read and less understood ... They are deplorably ignorant ... I do sincerely believe that the cheapest, speediest, easiest way to convert the heathen here is to convert the white ones first.'⁴⁴

One way of describing the modes of Bible interpretation employed by the *Jerusalem gangers* is to reflect on the discussions that took place among the three deputations authorized by the Cape Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church between 1848 and 1852 to administer the sacraments (baptism and holy communion), perform marriage ceremonies and confirm young people as members of the church. In view of the scarcity of written examples of Bible interpretation by the *Voortrekkers* and their immediate descendants, the eye-witness accounts by the church deputations are invaluable.

The first deputation, in 1848, consisted of Reverend Andrew Murray, Sr. and P. K. Albertyn, whose *bona fides* were questioned due an unfortunate printing error in the letter that Sir Harry Smith (the British military commander) sent to Paul Kruger; he intended to give assurance that the two clergy were delegated by the Synod 'for Christian and not political purposes', but the unfortunate omission of the 'not' made it very difficult to disprove accusations of an political agenda.⁴⁵ A female member of the Mooi River (Potchefstroom) congregation summed up these misgivings succinctly: 'Yes, you preachers say you come with the Bible, but after the Bible comes the British government.'⁴⁶

A few months later, the second deputation arrived with Reverend Eduard Faure and the pro-British William Robertson, who embraced every opportunity to pray for Queen Victoria and the Cape government.⁴⁷ When Faure tried to assure the Boer church members that the Cape church and government were serious about their welfare, the following response was given: 'We know that the Government of England is stronger than we are, but we know that the power of the Lord is stronger than us all ... but we reflect on Gideon, how he conquered the many enemies of the Israelites with the 300 men ... and we would rather wander with the Israelites for forty years than be subject to a government which has dealt with us such

⁴⁴ Edwin W. Smith, *The Life and Times of Daniel Lindley, 1801-1880* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), p. 160.

⁴⁵ J. Alton Templin, *Ideology on a Frontier: The Theological Foundation of Afrikaner Nationalism 1652-1910* (Westport and London: Greenwood, 1984), p. 132.

⁴⁶ *Die Kerkbode*, March 18, 1920: 107-108.

⁴⁷ Templin, *Ideology on a Frontier*, 133.

as this English government.⁴⁸ An almost typological relationship between Gideon and the Boer church members is presumed.

Reverend Andrew Murray, Jr. was appointed as the first permanent minister of the Orange River Sovereignty (residing in Bloemfontein) in 1849 and one of his first assignments was to visit the disgruntled Boer church members in the Transvaal. During his six-week visit Murray also met members of the *Jerusalemangers* in Marico (now North West Province), who voiced their political objections against the British in religious and apocalyptic imagery.⁴⁹ In a letter to his father, Murray describes his first meeting with these *Jerusalemangers*: 'On the way we called on one of those who refuse to come to church. After a couple of hours' conversation I left him, deeply grieved at the ignorance of these poor people. England is one of the horns of the beast, and of course those who receive her pay are made partakers of her sins. I hardly knew whether to weep or smile at some of his explanations of the prophecies and of Revelation, all tending to confirm their hopes of being soon called to trek to Jerusalem... he for the moment puzzled me by showing me the "*kanteekening*" (marginal notes of the Dutch *Statenvertaling*) on Revelation XVII.12, where all the countries of Europe are mentioned as being typified by the horns of the beast except Holland—with whom many Afrikaners had close ties.'⁵⁰

During a second visit (in November 1850) Murray was stopped near the Magaliesberg by some forty Boers, who challenged him in a heated debate by much quotation from Scripture and an orthodox Dutch theologian Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635–1711).⁵¹ The gist of the vigorous exchange was that the English government was equated with the Antichrist and that, if Murray refused to loosen his ties with the Cape government, he was not acceptable to them. During a second public debate Murray had to contend with no less than three members of the *Jerusalemangers* (Paul Roos, Stoffel de Wet and Jakob Erasmus) also arguing that England was one of the horns of the beast mentioned in Rev 17:12 and that all his ties had to be severed with the English government before he could be a true

⁴⁸ Hendrik S. Pretorius, Daniel W. Kruger and Coenraad Beyers (eds.), *Voortrekker-argiefstukke 1829–1849* (Pretoria: State Printer, 1937), pp. 363–64.

⁴⁹ Templin, *Ideology on a frontier*, 135.

⁵⁰ Johannes Du Plessis, *Het Leven van Andrew Murray* (Cape Town: South African Bible Society, 1920), p. 104.

⁵¹ Wilhelmus à Brakel, *Redelijke Godsdienst, in welke de goddelijke waarheden des Genaden-verbonds worden verklaard, tegen Partijen beschermd, en tot de Praktijk aangedrongen* Volume I & II. (Nijkerk: Calenbach, 1854 & 1855).

servant of Christ.⁵² Murray came to a compassionate conclusion in this letter to his father: 'I was very sorry to see them going in fancied security and holiness on the way to destruction; for they literally seek their salvation in their opposition to the Antichrist.'

In a report published in *De Kerkbode*, Murray refers to a tendency amongst the *Jerusalemgangers* to emphasize the election of believers to such an extent their salvation had not relationship with their piety.⁵³ The church historian Bouke Spoelstra has argued that the combination of this emphasis on election, combined with the association between the *Voortrekkers* and ancient Israel, were the most important reasons for the name *Jerusalemgangers*, although he also adds a laudable word of caution that the interpretation of the association between the *Voortrekkers* and Israel must allow for the use of figurative speech and not be taken too literally.⁵⁴

During the second half of the nineteenth century a Dutch traveller and land surveyor, De Kok (who published his travelogue under pseudonym of 'Hollander'), was asked by a group of farmers in the Rustenburg district how far it was to Jerusalem, to which he responded by pointing to a map of Africa and indicating that the distance between Cape Town and Rustenburg was approximately one eighth of the distance between Rustenburg and Jerusalem.⁵⁵ This question of the distance to Jerusalem is most likely related to the a table in the *Statenvertaling* of the Bible, in which the distance between Jerusalem and 44 other cities were indicated in 'miles'; the shortest distance was from Cairo to Jerusalem (50 miles), while the longest distance was from Parnambuco, Brazil (1285 miles).⁵⁶ Though this may seem straightforward enough, a number of different 'mile' lengths were in use around this time; it may be that the *Jerusalemgangers* were presuming that the 'mile' used in the table corresponded with the British statute mile to which they were accustomed (about 1.6 km). Furthermore, while the 'Netherlandic mile' was equal to one kilometre from 1820, during the seventeenth century—when the *Statenvertaling* was first printed—a 'Hollandic mile' of about 5.8 kilometres was in use.⁵⁷ No confusion about

⁵² Du Plessis, *Andrew Murray*, 122–123.

⁵³ *De Kerkbode* 1850: 85–86, cit. Adriaan Morees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652–1937* (Cape Town: South African Bible Society, 1937), p. 748.

⁵⁴ Spoelstra, *Doppers in Suid-Afrika*, 116–17.

⁵⁵ Karel J. De Kok, *Toen en Thans* (Cape Town: Dusseau, 1898).

⁵⁶ Claasen, *Jerusalemgangers*, 40.

⁵⁷ Johannes de Vries (ed). *Winkler Prins Algemene Encyclopaedie* (Vol 11; 3rd ed.; Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1936), p. 797. It will of course be pure speculation to consider the possibility

the ultimately vast distance to Jerusalem existed, however, when Reverend J. H. Neethling asked a group of young people in Potchefstroom whether one could travel all the way to Jerusalem on dry ground: they laughed and one responded, 'you will have to fly!' This indicates that a more informed geographical understanding and a recognition of the huge distances involved, existed amongst the general public and that the geographical ignorance of the *Jerusalemgangers* were not representative of the *Voortrekkers* and their descendents as a whole.⁵⁸

Another indication of how the Bible was interpreted by the *Jerusalemgangers* can be found in the name that Enslin gave to his farm in Marico, 'Meshech'. This name comes from Ps 120:5 ('Woe is me, that I am an alien in Meshech, that I must live amongst the tents of Kedar'). Next to this verse was a note in the margin of the Dutch *Statenvertaling* that depicted Meshech and Kedar as a heathen and idolatrous people; this seems to suggest that Enslin (and his fellow *Jerusalemgangers*) did not feel at home in Marico. This example not only illustrates a literalistic understanding of the Bible but also seems to indicate a fatalistic understanding of election.⁵⁹

One of the earliest descriptions of the *Jerusalemgangers* was provided by the Reverend Neethling who, after a visit to Marico in 1852, described them as a 'fanatic religious sect under the influence of a prophetess' called Mietje Gous.⁶⁰ During the nineteenth century Christian sects mushroomed in many countries, and most of them had a well-developed eschatology that emphasised the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Jerusalem often played an important part in the eschatological expectations of these sectarian groups and there is evidence that a number of *Voortrekkers* held similar beliefs even before they embarked on their epic Great Trek. One

that the 'Jerusalem travelers' experienced 'cognitive dissonance' when they decided that it would be viable to travel all the way to Jerusalem guided by a small map and a table with distances in the back of their Bible.

⁵⁸ Gardener, *Ons Kerk*, 51.

⁵⁹ Engelbrecht, *Geskiedenis*, 65.

⁶⁰ Dirk J. Potgieter (ed.), 'Jerusalemgangers', in *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* Volume 6 (Cape Town: Nasou, 1970–76), pp. 192–93. According to Claasen, *Jerusalemgangers*, 57 the *Jerusalemgangers* referred to Exodus 15:20 in which mention is made of Miriam as prophet and this allowed the widow Mietje Gous to be called a 'prophet' as the female counterpart of Enslin who as also known as a 'prophet'. This emphasis on the prophetic office seems to correlate with the books by à Brakel that were very popular with the *Jerusalem-gangers*. The widow Gous was also known for her herbal medicine that gave the *Jerusalemgangers* the confidence to travel through an area known to be riddled with malaria—with fatal consequences for many who undertook the journey in 1852.

of the texts that motivated at least some of the *Voortrekkers* was Joel 2:32: 'for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape'.⁶¹

The negative impact of British imperialism on the use of the Bible can be illustrated by the following incident described by Chapman:⁶² during a visit to Marico a Bible was sold to the family Breitenbach; but when they established that the Bible was printed in London, a hole was dug and the 'contaminated' Bible was picked up with two branches and placed in the hole before burying it—untouched by human hands! Although the Bible was held in very high esteem and had an important (almost iconic) status in *Voortrekker* houses the mere fact that a Bible was printed in the capital of the British Empire (London) made it unfit for further use in a *Voortrekker* household.

Tobie Hanekom has interpreted the *Jerusalem gangers*' focus on Jerusalem as the result of a sectarian, chiliastic inclination culminating in a pilgrimage to the Heavenly City.⁶³ A similar explanation of the *Jerusalem gangers* as a sectarian group amongst the *Voortrekkers* can be found in G. B. A. Gerdener's history of the DRC.⁶⁴ Hanekom also makes the interesting connection with the 1901 novel *Jerusalem*, by the well-known Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf, which describes the way in which a revivalist preacher influenced a rural community to commit themselves to a journey to Jerusalem.⁶⁵ Closer to home, Hanekom related the local *Jerusalem gangers* to a type of nineteenth-century spirituality which prevailed in remote areas of the Cape Province, combining piety with a rebellious notion of disassociating themselves from mainline churches.⁶⁶

For these small sectarian groups, the Great Trek was not only caused by socio-economical factors (like the manumission of slaves in 1834) but driven by religious ideals of travelling as pilgrims until they reached the Promised Land. In this regard, one should take note that during the 1850s only 18 out of 42 young people in the Marico area were confirmed in the Dutch Reformed Church, suggestive of a community living on the margins of emigrant Afrikaner society and largely isolated from the theology and spirituality of the mainstream churches.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Van der Watt, *Karakters*, 25–26.

⁶² Chapman, *Travels*, 36.

⁶³ Tobie Hanekom, 'Die Jerusalem gangers,' *Die Kerkbode* 63/10 March 9, 1949, 595–96.

⁶⁴ Gerdener, *Ons Kerk*, 67.

⁶⁵ Selma Lagerlöf, *Jerusalem* (Berlin: Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1901/1961).

⁶⁶ Hanekom, 'Jerusalem gangers', 596.

⁶⁷ Gerdener, *Ons Kerk*, 59.

Conclusion

This investigation of nineteenth century biblical interpretation in Southern Africa and its significance in resistance against British imperialism suggests that one should clearly distinguish between the use of 'exodus' as a figurative or metaphoric description of the migration of sizable population groups as a result of various reasons and use of the concept to describe a specifically religiously-motivated journey which draws deliberately on the biblical tradition. Although some *Voortrekker* documents used phrases gleaned from the Old Testament—like Natal being described as 'a land overflowing with milk and honey' and the Great Trek related to the 'wandering in the desert'—these references can hardly be construed as evidence for the existence of a general presupposition amongst the *Voortrekkers* that they were the Chosen People responding to a divine calling.⁶⁸ The mere fact that the *Voortrekkers* named several towns and farms with names from the Bible (Bethlehem, Jordan, Jericho, Nylstroom, etc.) does not necessarily imply that they understood themselves as 'God's chosen people fleeing Egypt.'⁶⁹

The name *Jerusalemgangsters* also requires some reflection and explanation. It is striking that during the nineteenth century numerous examples may be found of utopian construals of 'Jerusalem', from Brigham Young in Utah to secular Zionism across Europe.⁷⁰ Recent studies of religious fundamentalism have indicated a tendency to identify an enemy with whom the small inner circle are in conflict (Britain referred to as 'an overwhelming power' who acted as the 'oppressor') and who are accordingly demonised (Britain being identified with one of the horns of the beast in Revelation 17). Such groups (whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim) have the common inclination to focus on Jerusalem 'as a main identity marker of their faith.'⁷¹

⁶⁸ Du Toit, 'Captive to the Nationalist Paradigm', 67: 'A naïve and fundamentalist religious world view is not necessarily the same thing as an exclusivist nationalist claim to divine election.'

⁶⁹ Barbara Green, 'Great Trek and Long Walk: Readings of a Biblical Symbol', *Biblical Interpretation* 7 (1999), pp. 272–300 (272–74) recognized the danger of oversimplification but then continues to assume that the use of Biblical place names by the *Voortrekkers* imply a 'Boer identity' rooted in their understanding of being the Chosen People.

⁷⁰ W. Sibley Towner, 'A Crisis of the Imagination: The Real Jerusalem Confronts the Ideal Jerusalem', *Interpretation* 54 (2000), pp. 13–22 (19).

⁷¹ David Zeidan, 'Jerusalem in Radical Jewish and Muslim Fundamentalisms', *Evangelical Quarterly* 78 (2006), pp. 221–23.

In recent Southern African historiography it has been keenly debated whether the *Voortrekkers* and their descendants considered themselves to be a people with a special (covenantal) relationship with God and a divine calling to spread Christianity and Western Civilisation in Southern Africa. When one considers the meagre support generated by the *Jerusalemgangers* and the extent of the ridicule and scepticism they were exposed to, it seems probable that the idea of the Afrikaners being a 'chosen people' did not receive widespread support amongst Afrikaners as a whole during the middle of the nineteenth century.⁷²

Although the British 'often legitimated their global empire as a means by which Christian 'civilisation' could be spread more widely', the *Jerusalemgangers* used vivid Biblical imagery to establish a hybrid identity.⁷³ This identity mimed the Christian religion of the Empire but subverted the dominant narratives of the colonial power, transforming the benevolent Christian civiliser into the dominant and threatening Pharaoh ('*overmacht*' or 'overwhelming force', to use the terminology coined by Lion Cachet) in the counter-narrative of the *Jerusalemgangers*.

What were the primary reasons for this vehement antagonism against the British that reached a crescendo amongst the *Jerusalemgangers*? The pro-British newspaper in Bloemfontein, *The Friend of the Sovereignty*, of June 10, 1850 pointed out that there was amongst the Dutch speaking inhabitants of the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony a widespread experience of wrongs endured under British rule and this led to strong resistance against the British Government. This strong feeling of resentment against the British the newspaper felt 'will be modified by the power of religion and soothed by the happy influence of time.'

In a somewhat ironic synthesis, one may argue that the 'colonial situation in South Africa was not only destructive, it was also productive, producing new dreams and new subjectivities'.⁷⁴ The dreams of the *Jerusalemgangers* were, however, not necessarily representative of the Afrikaner emigrant (*Voortrekker*) population in general.

What permanent legacy did the *Jerusalemgangers* leave behind? The map of South Africa reveals a few traces of their influence: a mountain

⁷² Hermann B. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), pp. 178–79; Hermann B. Giliomee and Bernard Mbenga, *New History of South Africa* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2007), p. 152.

⁷³ Linda Woodhead, *An Introduction to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 392.

⁷⁴ David Chidester, 'Dreaming in the Contact Zone: Zulu Dreams, Visions and Religion in Nineteenth-Century South Africa', *JAAR* 76 (2008), pp. 27–53 (41).

called 'Enselsberg' (a defective spelling of Enslin) in the Marico near Zeerust and a town and small river called 'Nylstroom' to the north of Pretoria.⁷⁵ Within a few years even these faint traces will probably be difficult to find and even more difficult to interpret; therefore there may be some value in paying some interest to a small group that has seldom been a priority on the agenda of South African historiographers but presents a fascinating example of resistance against an Empire, informed by a literal understanding of the Bible and trying to make sense of living on the Southern African frontier.

In conclusion: although it is clear that the views held by the *Jerusalem-gangers* were not representative of the larger population, they are an example of a small group who used the Bible as a narrative frame to establish their own hybrid identity by means of mimicry and resistance.

⁷⁵ Spoelstra, *Doppers in Suid-Afrika*, 118.

THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS: THE BIBLE VERSUS THE VEDAS

Hugh Pyper

My purpose in this paper is to do no more than sketch out the crude contours of what I have increasingly come to see as an important but often overlooked example of the centrality of the Bible in the shaping of the modern world. It arises from the privilege of discussions with students from the Christian states of North East India who are seeking ways to use the biblical tradition to fight for justice for their ethnic and religious groups against what they see as oppression by Hindu nationalists who equate 'Indianness' with being Hindu, and who define Hinduism on the basis of a loyalty to the ancient Sanskrit scriptures.

What has become clear to me is that the problem in using the Bible as a resource for these beleaguered Christian groups is that the Bible is, surprisingly, at the heart of the Hindu nationalist ideology they see as the cause of their oppression. The biblical tradition is hard to use to support the claims of indigenous peoples against cultural domination in any case, given that one of its key purposes is to establish how people who have no ties of birth or residence to a territory can legitimately dispossess those who do. This is compounded by the fact that the kind of Hindu nationalism represented in contemporary India by such parties as the influential BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) has its roots in a conscious mimicry of European nationalism which draws on biblical models. That the Bible has been so important in the shaping of contemporary South Asia may seem counterintuitive given the relative lack of success of Christian mission in that part of the world.¹

How that comes to be is a complex story with ramifications far beyond India and, as with all such stories, singling out a point of approach is a chancy business. One often downplayed but surprisingly pervasive element, however, is the importance of the different cultural attitudes to

¹ In 2001, census records for India indicate that around 24 million people (2.34% of the population) declared themselves to be Christian. In particular states in the North East, however, notably Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya, the proportion of Christians rose as high as 90%. The state with the largest number of Christians (6.9 million; 19%) was Kerala, home to the ancient Mar Thoma tradition (Census data available on http://www.census-india.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Social_and_cultural/Religion.aspx).

the Bible in Germany and Britain during the period of European imperial expansion and the way in which Indian intellectuals responded to these. We have here a particular case of what postcolonial theorists call 'mimicry.' In order to assert difference and distinctiveness, paradoxically those who are resisting cultural and economic imperialism have to couch their protests in language and concepts that their oppressors will recognize. Indeed, the ideology of protest itself is most likely to be formulated by those who have been exposed to the education provided by the colonising power and so are inevitably influenced by the cultural models that this inculcates. In this case, my argument will be that Hindu nationalism owes much to the biblical model of nationhood and to Western disputes over nationality and the nature of Hinduism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In looking at the interaction between biblical scholarship and modern Indian nationalism, a key figure is the German writer and philosopher J. G. Herder. It is he who is responsible in the late eighteenth century for the development of a radical new concept of the nation based not on political loyalties but on the concept of the *Volk*. This finds its unity and identity in language and in the shared culture that a language represents and for Herder that is epitomised in the oldest poetry of the nation. This is all in the context of what he sees as the need for the politically divided German peoples to find a way to assert their common identity in the face of French and English domination at the end of the eighteenth century.

What is not so often recognised is that the model that Herder looks to is explicitly biblical: the unity of land, people and language in ancient Israel. His great work on *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* is not just a tribute to the literary qualities of the psalms, but an exploration of what he then considered to be the oldest available expression of the spirit of a *Volk*.² As F. M. Barnard has pointed out, it is in this work, rather than in some of his more explicitly political writings, that the core of his ideas on national identity is to be found.³

² J. G. Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie: Eine Anleitung für die Liebhaber derselben, und der ältesten Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes* (2 vols.; Dessau, 1782–83). Given the importance of this work, it is surprising that the only complete English translation remains that by James Marsh: *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (2 vols.; Burlington: Edward Smith, 1833).

³ F. W. Barnard *Herder on Nationality, Humanity and History* (Montreal/London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); see especially the first chapter 'The Hebraic Roots of Herder's Nationalism', pp. 17–37.

This turn to ancient Israel as the model for a *Volk* has some unexpected implications, however. The poetry of the Bible is, in Herder's view, the basis for Israel's national identity, but for that very reason it cannot be the basis for the distinctive identity of the German *Volk*. That has to be based on the ancient poetry of the German-speaking peoples, which led Herder and his successors to the exploration of folk-tales in Germany and Scandinavia and the revival of Norse myths as an alternative basis for the cultural unity of the German peoples.

It is important to realize that Herder is not motivated by a dislike for the Hebrew Scriptures. It is his high view of their specific value for the people of Israel that leads him to surrender them to Israel. What German speakers need is their own poetic tradition which will perform the same function. Unfortunately, no body of written literature of the antiquity or scope of the Bible, or, to take another model, the Homeric corpus, had been preserved in the German lands.⁴ For those who sought to develop a unified sense of German nationhood to set against the French and British examples what was needed was an epic literature of a range and antiquity to set against the Bible that would embody the spirit of the German peoples.⁵ This turned out to be the Sanskrit traditions of India. How and why that link was made is what we will now turn to discuss.

The Indian Scriptures

Well before Herder came on the scene, the possibility of using Indian traditions to counter claims to authority based on the Bible had occurred to radical thinkers. The history of this early interest in the Indian texts and its religious basis has been exhaustively explored by Urs App.⁶ He traces the sources of the rumours that were reaching scholars in Europe about the existence and contents of sacred books, at first from China and then from India, that seemed to predate the Old Testament. In the case of

⁴ As I have discussed elsewhere, an alternative briefly appeared in the shape of James MacPherson's 'Ossian', in *Fingal, An Epic Poem, in Six Books: Together With Several Other Poems, Composed by Ossian the Son of Fingal; Translated from the Galic Language* (London: T. Becket and P. A. de Hondt, 1762), which purported to be a reconstruction of the epic literature of the Celtic peoples, but this was quickly dismissed as a forgery.

⁵ For a wider examination of this phenomenon in German thought in the nineteenth century, see George W. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁶ Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

the Indian writings, they were also said to contain stories that resembled those from the Bible's ancient histories and which, arguably, could be a source for the biblical accounts.

Such rumours intrigued the most influential radical opponent to the Church of his day, Voltaire, who welcomed any weapon that could be used against the Bible's, and thus the Church's, claims to authority. As App puts it, Voltaire was 'in need of monotheistic religions, rites, and especially sacred scriptures that were old and flexible enough to serve as Ambrosian whips for Judaism and Christianity.'⁷

To begin with, Voltaire sought these alternative scriptures in Confucian writings and their rational ethicism, at least as they were understood at the time. In this he was caught up with the then current fascination with China. Only later did his attention turn to Indian texts which were reported to be even older. They were also said to show evidence of the kind of ethical monotheism which Voltaire understood as the true and primeval religion and which, he argued, was the source for much of what the Old Testament claimed to be a special revelation to the Jews. He was quite happy to praise the antiquity and the depth of the Indian scriptures if this helped to undermine the status of the Bible and to argue that parallel stories in the two traditions showed that the Bible was derived from these earlier traditions and was not a special revelation. Dorothy Figueira sums up the place of this Indian scriptural tradition in Voltaire's polemic: 'It allowed him to call into question the chronology of the sacred book, the chosen status of the Jews, the origin of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the diffusion of our mythology.'⁸

Voltaire's knowledge of India and of its textual traditions was entirely second-hand and deeply flawed; most of the texts he relied on were either forgeries or deeply distorted in translation. As a result, his judgements were often wildly misinformed. What matters, however, is his exceptional influence on his contemporaries and successors and his presentation of plausible alternatives to the authority of the Bible and the Church. His

⁷ App, *Birth of Orientalism*, pp. 66–67.

⁸ Dorothy M. Figueira, *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins: Theorizing Authority through Myths of Identity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), p. 11. Figueira is inclined to attribute Voltaire's polemic to his desire to 'vent his spleen against the Jews.' This may be misleading. Undoubtedly Voltaire's works do contain some strongly anti-Jewish statements, but the Jews are not his main target. It is the Church that is in his sights. If attacking the historical and textual authority of the Old Testament and the community that produced it can help undermine the Church's claims to power, then he is happy to heap all the calumnies he can muster on their heads.

model of India as the home of humanity's oldest religious expression has had lasting influence.

However, Voltaire also saw contemporary Indian religion, as he understood it, as evidence of a fall into decadence under the influence of a malign priestly caste. This, of course, was a parallel to his understanding of the decline of a priest-ridden Church and another familiar biblical paradigm reapplied. The implication in some biblical texts that, under Moses, Israel represented pure ethical monotheism only to decline into idolatry through a combination of the corrupting influence of the neighbouring peoples and the connivance of a corrupt monarchy and priesthood was also at work here. Again, this was a motif that would prove to have continuing applications in the developing understanding of Hinduism both in Europe and India.

All this means that a formidable rival to the biblical tradition as the oldest and profoundest record of the human spirit and its religious life had appeared. What, however, did this have to do with the German peoples? How could such a distant and alien tradition have the kind of deep resonance for German speakers that would give the foundation to the German *Volk*? Surely the Indian Vedas are no more relevant to them than the Hebrew Scriptures?

Sir William Jones

This is where the parallel work of Sir William Jones comes into the story. A brilliant linguist, Jones was appointed as puisne judge to the Supreme Court of Bengal in 1783.⁹ He took the view that, where possible, cases should be tried in conformity with local practice, either under Muslim or Hindu law. His own strong foundation in biblical studies led him to the conviction that it was in the religious texts of Hinduism that this law would be found. Here he is quite in line with the standard assumption of Western scholars at the time that texts were what underlay all developed religious systems and that these texts would have characteristics in common with the Bible, particularly in embodying legal and ethical principles. Jones determined to learn Sanskrit in order to be able to pronounce with authority on local law and to translate a text known the 'Laws of Menu.'

⁹ In English law, 'puisne judge' is the title given to an ordinary member of a superior court in distinction to the Chief Judge. The nearest US equivalent may be 'Associate Justice.'

He compared his enterprise to that of Justinian in terms of Roman law, but it also had echoes of Moses' role in promulgating the laws of Israel.

Unlike Voltaire and his continental predecessors, Jones was convinced that the Sanskrit texts were related to the Bible, rather than set against it, and, indeed, that they represented the religious heritage of the children of Japhet.¹⁰ Part of his wider purpose in studying these texts was to counter the attack on the Bible that the followers of Voltaire were mounting. He used all his resources as a linguist and jurist to show that the apparently much expanded chronology of the Indian texts did not contradict the biblical account but could be fitted to the biblical chronology as worked out by Archbishop Ussher. In this way, parallels to biblical stories such as the flood in the Sanskrit texts could be explained. These were not sources later drawn on by the biblical writers, as humanist critics were claiming. Instead these texts were independent contemporary witnesses to the events and served to confirm rather than weaken the historical authority of the Bible.

Already a noted linguist, Jones was led by his encounter with Sanskrit to formulate the idea that Sanskrit, Greek and Latin 'had sprung from some common source' and indeed could be considered part of the same 'family', an apparently original and paradigm-shifting use of this term in the context of languages.¹¹ As Garland Cannon remarks, rather understatedly, 'By relating Sanskrit to some European tongues, he added a cultural link to the ties between East and West.'¹²

Having developed the concept of language families, Jones proceeded to draw up a classification of known languages. Importantly, he included what he called the Gothick and Germanic languages in the same family as Sanskrit, Latin and Greek while allocating Hebrew and Arabic into a quite different family. His thinking here, although it depended on philological research, once again reflected his reliance on the biblical account of the separate destinies of the descendants of the three sons of Noah.

¹⁰ The importance of differing interpretations of the story of the sons of Noah for the development of European understanding of the relationships between languages and cultures cannot be overestimated. This is well explored in Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (trans. S. Wichmann; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

¹¹ Jones published this influential theory in his Third Anniversary Discourse before the Asiatic Society on the History and Culture of the Hindus (delivered 2 Feb 1786, published 1788). See Sir William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones* (13 vols.; London: John Stockdale & John Walker, 1808), vol. 3, pp. 24–46.

¹² Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 246.

The two language families, which he called the Japhetic and the Semitic, corresponded to the two great families of the descendants of Japhet and Shem.

Jones's work thus suggested both that there was a familial relationship between the German and Sanskrit traditions and that this 'Indo-German' tradition, as Jones called it, was separate from the Semitic one. For those who were looking for a new basis for German identity, this not only provided a link to an ancient tradition and literature, but also strengthened the sense that German national identity had to be kept separate from Jewish influences. This idea had been popularised by Fichte in his influential *Addresses to the German Nation* of 1806.¹³ Drawing on Herder's idea of the *Volk*, Fichte went well beyond Herder in calling for the active removal of those elements in German social life which were foreign contaminants, in particular the Jews. Whereas Herder had called for Jews to enjoy full rights as citizens, Fichte argued that this would be harmful to the nation. Although he followed Herder in putting a common language at the heart of German identity, he modified this by adding a requirement for the true German to share a particular commitment to German ideals of freedom, marking what he called an 'inner border'. Not all German speakers shared these ideals and there is little doubt that Fichte included German-speaking Jews among those who did not.

We should note that driving a wedge between the Indo-German and the biblical traditions was the reverse of what Jones intended; indeed, his whole effort was dedicated to harmonising the two traditions, as we shall go in to discuss in the next section. Nevertheless, the importance of his work for German nationalists was that, at one stroke, it gave a means of establishing a foundation for the German-speaking *Volk* through the notion of a common Indo-German tradition, disseminated through the migrations of what the Vedic texts knew as the Aryan peoples, a term which came into new currency through the work of Max Müller. Now German speakers could claim organic continuity with this ancient and rich Aryan literary tradition. For many German thinkers, the Vedas clearly outbid the claims of a collection of comparatively recent Semitic texts imposed on German culture by Latin missionaries.¹⁴ The notion of a common Aryan *Volk* marked by a shared linguistic heritage gave

¹³ Gregory Moore (ed.) *Fichte: Addresses to the German Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ The irony is that it was precisely Herder's reverence for the biblical tradition and his sense of its essential connection to Israel that led to this reappraisal of its role within Europe.

German speakers a tradition that was older than the Hebrew. It was also a heritage divorced from ancestral claims to land. In both India and Germany, according to the invasion hypothesis, the Aryan peoples arrived as migrants but established their right to settle and rule by their military and cultural superiority over the indigenous peoples.

Britain and the Aryan Heritage

In an interesting study, Thomas Trautmann points out the difference that develops in the German and British attitudes to Indian tradition and the Aryan hypothesis at this point.¹⁵ One might think that these two European nations which seemed to share an Aryan heritage would unite in its interpretation. This was not so, however. We saw that Jones was intent on bridging the gap between the Indian and biblical traditions at a time when others were seeking to use that gap in order to undermine the authority of the Bible and the Church. This difference in approach seems to continue.

One eminent figure who spans but also exemplifies the gap between the British and German traditions is the noted Indologist Max Müller who was born and educated in Germany but spent his academic career in England. His translation of the Rig-Veda, to which he devoted many years, arose out of his conviction that knowledge of the Indian tradition could be beneficial to a European audience. As has been mentioned, he popularized the use of the term 'Aryan' to describe the racial group that spoke Indo-European languages, although he came later to repudiate this racial aspect and to deplore the political use of the term, especially in the growing tendency to use it to argue for the racial superiority of one group over another. He took an evolutionary view and saw a line of ascent in a distinctively Aryan form of thought first emerging in these ancient texts and culminating in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, which he also translated into English. The fact that Müller related the Indian scriptures to Kant rather than following Jones in relating them to the Bible reflected at least in part the different attitudes of the two men to the Bible, and especially the Old Testament. They in turn were affected by the different cultural attitudes to the Bible in Britain and Germany.

¹⁵ Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

Müller himself is a prime witness to the existence of these differences. He confessed in his autobiography, published in 1901, that he was still bemused by his discovery on reaching Oxford in 1848 that the questions that were being posed in German universities about the nature and reliability of the Bible seemed to be completely ignored.¹⁶ He was firm in regarding himself as a Christian but saw no threat to his faith in any assault on the historicity and ethics of the biblical texts and by 1848 had long abandoned any sense that the Bible represented a special revelation. For Müller, both the Bible and the Hindu scriptures reflected the fact that the limitations of language meant that human beings expressed their appreciation of religious truth as myth. Neither could be taken as revelatory in a traditional sense but both could, with proper study, be made to yield up evidence of the core of human spirituality.

His English contemporaries, he discovered, had no interest in the questions of the textual and historical reliability of the Bible that had exercised his German colleagues. Instead, they were preoccupied with the details of liturgical practice and ecclesiology. In private, he was puzzled by encountering otherwise intelligent people who could ignore historical and textual problems with the Bible, or else was shocked to discover that, under a guise of orthodoxy, they hid not just agnosticism but a kind of mocking scepticism that he had not expected to meet. What these reminiscences confirm is that the role of the Bible in the two intellectual cultures was radically different. Whatever one's private sentiments, in academic circles in Britain there was a public acceptance of the Bible as revelation which it was wise not to counter. That was not the case in German academia.¹⁷

Trautmann sums the situation up by saying that for the British the Aryan hypothesis stood for inclusiveness and the kinship between Britons and Indians, whereas in Continental Europe it was a marker of exclusion and identity. Indeed, it is in Germany that Indology as a branch of academic inquiry develops. Both British and German scholars seem to forget that it began as a British field of study. As he notes, these differences reflected the fact that Britain was preoccupied with its relations with India whereas Germans were interested in the boundaries of Europeanness.¹⁸

¹⁶ Max Müller, *My Autobiography: A Fragment* (ed. W. G. M. Müller; London: Longman's, Green, & Co., 1901), pp. 287–307.

¹⁷ We should recall that it was only in 1871 that the necessity of subscribing to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England in order to hold a fellowship at Oxford or Cambridge was abolished. This test was bound to lead to a public conformity which masked private dissent among academics.

¹⁸ Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*, p. 221.

At one level, this is easy to explain pragmatically. Clearly, as the colonizing power, Britain faced practical problems in dealing with the diverse population of India which overrode whatever idealized image of India may have been prevalent. German thinkers did not have to deal with those problems. Yet there is another factor that contributes to the different attitudes the British and German traditions adopted with regard to Indian texts, which is not much discussed in this debate. It is the difference in attitude to the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, in the two cultures.

Luther versus King James

Again, there are complex questions here, and there is certainly no unanimity of attitude to the Bible or to India in either culture. Yet the difference that matters here can be summed up in short hand in the different implications of the designation of the vernacular Bible. The resonances of on the one hand Luther's Bible and one which comes to be known as the Authorized or King James Bible are not the same. In the German lands, the German Bible, for all its cultural importance, is not a marker of political union. Indeed, one thing that divides the German lands politically is the division between Protestant and Catholic provinces. Although they may share the Bible, they certainly do not share the same attitude to Luther's translation of it. Luther himself, as is notorious, became deeply antipathetic to the Jewish dimension of the Old Testament. For these reasons, recourse to the Bible and to the Old Testament in particular in shaping the political destiny of a new unified Germany was problematic.

In Britain, by contrast, King James' commissioning of a new translation was quite explicitly designed to unify Scotland and England and the two thrones he held and to ensure conformity of worship across his realm in the spirit of the biblical model of one king and one temple. Furthermore, one legacy of the strong Calvinist impulse in the British reformation was a respect for the continuing relevance of the old covenant and indeed for the idea of a nation as a covenanted people. However diluted in later generations, this understanding contributes to the way in which the British polity was able to ally itself to the Old Testament model of monarchy under God and to see itself as a continuation or new embodiment of Israel. This was made easier by the fact that, compared to the German lands, Britain had only a residual Jewish population and certainly nothing to compare with the visible presence of sizeable Jewish communities in many German provinces. The sense that shadows nineteenth century

discourse in Germany on the Old Testament and the Jewish people that they are alien presences in the German lands was therefore hardly relevant in the British context. Continuing Judaism and how to co-exist with it was a live social issue in Germany, just as dealing with the realities of governing India was in Britain.

Furthermore, as Adrian Hastings has argued, Britain came nearer to embodying the Old Testament model of the nation than any other European country at the time.¹⁹ An attack on the Old Testament worried the British because important aspects of their own cultural identity and understanding of their role as colonizers were based upon it. All the more reason, then, for Indian opponents of British rule to turn to the critiques that German scholars had already developed but also all the more reason for them to counter with a corresponding interpretation based on their own textual traditions.

Bible versus Veda

However, this newfound status for India as the cradle of Western civilization had what seemed to many to be unacceptable implications. Could it really be that the dark-skinned polytheists of India were the cultural ancestors of Europeans? This was coupled with the influence of the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, which led to a desire to bring the point of cultural diversity closer to Israel.

As the century progressed, scholarly opinion veered towards the idea that the common Indo-European tradition was brought to India by invasion from central Asia in an equivalent movement to the invasion of Europe by the Aryan peoples. This then allowed a rather different account of the development of Indian civilization. According to this view, the pure fair-skinned stock of the Aryans with their highly developed sense of religion over time became merged with and corrupted by the superstitions and racial characteristics of the dark-skinned Dravidians and Tamils.

As Bryant puts it in his study of the history of the debates over the nature of the Aryan people, this meant that India, rather than being seen as the cradle of Aryan civilization, became regarded as its grave.²⁰ What should not be overlooked is the parallel here to the biblical account of the

¹⁹ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Wiles Lectures; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁰ Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origin of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 28.

origins of the kingdoms of Israel. The Bible also tells a story of a people with a developed monotheism coming from outside into Palestine and then becoming corrupted by the idolatry and debauchery of the original inhabitants. Just as the Israelites became seduced away from their pure early beliefs by compromising with the polytheism of the indigenous population (if the deuteronomists are to be believed), so too the Aryans descended into decadence aided and abetted by a corrupt priestly class.

For the British especially, this revised view of the Aryan legacy had political advantages. For some of the apologists of the British presence in India, British rule represented another instance of a fair-skinned Aryan people bringing enlightenment to the sub-continent. This time, however, the warning over the corrupting power of the idolatry of the native population had to be heeded. In an understanding that drew on the unifying tradition that Jones' embodied, this Aryan people, the British, were also the heirs and inheritors of the Bible. Their rule thus brought together the Semitic and Aryan traditions in a way that went entirely against the German understanding of this relationship. British missionaries and colonisers, therefore, took the Bible as a British book to India. It is a fact of the history of Christian mission, however, that Christianity has struggled to take root in cultures that already have a rich tradition of authoritative written texts. India, China, the Muslim world, Japan; in all these situations, Christianity has had limited success. Its spread in South America and sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, shows that where no such literary tradition exists, or survives, the situation can be very different.

What that meant, however, is that for British missionaries, the resistance of the Indian population to conversion becomes a problem that led not to a respect for the Indian texts which proved such a robust alternative to the Bible but to a need to undermine and denigrate the texts and their adherents.²¹ Clearly, there were many exceptions to this attitude. The ambivalence and even contradictoriness of British attitudes to India are demonstrated by the fact that Trautmann's study contains two consecutive chapters entitled 'Britain's Indomania' and 'Britain's Indophobia'.

²¹ Clearly, there are many exceptions to this attitude, but the point is that it does exist. R. S. Sugirtharajah gives an interesting account of an alternative strategy adopted by Indian evangelists who seek to naturalize the Hebrew Scriptures into an Indian context in the chapter entitled 'Texts and Testament: The Hebrew Scriptures in Colonial Context' in his *The Bible and Empire: Postcolonial Explorations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 145–91. What this does indicate is the problem that the Bible presented to colonized and colonizer alike.

The history of Victorian imperialism shows how contested within Britain the empire was even in its heyday, but the impulse to set these textual traditions in opposition to each other is evident. A notorious contribution to this was the statement by Lord Macaulay in his minute on Indian education where he dismissed the whole of Indian literature as not being worth a single shelf of European literature.²² As is inevitable, this led to a defensive reaction and a battle over authority in terms set by the agenda of the ruling power. The Indian champions of the Vedas had to defend them as having authority and value in a way in which the proponents of the Bible would recognise. There was no mileage in arguing that these were not the terms that matter. To compete with the Bible, India's texts had to be the embodiment of the law, they had to enshrine a cosmology and to be the key marker of political and cultural identity as an Indian.

As a result, important though its effects on Europe were, this battle over the status of the Bible and the Indian texts had even more profound effects on India, on Hinduism and on the rise of the modern Indian state. Richard King, in his *Orientalism and Religion*, contends that 'Hinduism' as a modern construct has been profoundly shaped by European colonial influences. The location of the core of Indian religion in particular Sanskrit texts is, he argues, a product of Western perceptions which latched onto these and ignored the oral and popular manifestations of religious life. Jones is a prime proponent of this attitude. Importantly, however, King points out how this particular bias suited the interests of the scholarly Brahmin castes who were quite content to see their particular brand of spirituality and textual traditions taken as the norm. He quotes von Stietencron on this: '... western students saw Hinduism as a unity. The Indians had no reason to contradict this; to them the religious and cultural unity discovered by western scholars was highly welcome in their search for national identity.'²³

Scholars shaped by a biblically-based understanding of what religion should be thus provided the Indian intellectual and political classes with a way of asserting national unity despite the plurality of languages, oral

²² Thomas B. Macaulay, 'Minute of the 2nd of February 1835', in *Speeches by Lord Macaulay with His Minute on Indian Education* (ed. G. M. Young; London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 352.

²³ Heinrich von Stietencron 'Hinduism: on the Proper Use of a Descriptive Term', in G.-D. Sontheimer and H. Kulke (eds.) *Hinduism Reconsidered* (South Indian Studies 24; New Delhi: Manohar, 1989), pp. 11–28, especially pp. 14–15, quoted in Richard King *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East'* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 103.

traditions, and popular religious practices. If the tradition of nationalism founded on the idea of the *Volk* in Germany was in the early nineteenth century already using the Vedas to counter the biblical tradition, it is hardly a surprise that an emerging Indian anticolonial nationalism took this example to heart. Like Germany, India had been politically fragmented and subject to various sorts of foreign invasion and rule; like Germany, its own traditions had been overlaid and corrupted by priestly interests and foreign imports; like Germany, it needed to recover its deepest sense of national identity in its oldest literature.²⁴

We thus have the paradox that the Indian nationalism which resorts to the Sanskrit texts as the basis of its unity has deeply biblical roots. The British adherence to the Bible as authoritative combined with the German discovery of the Indian tradition as a basis for a renewed sense of national identity led in India to the development of a new attitude to the Sanskrit texts and their relationship to an Indian national identity.

The force of the paradox comes out most clearly in a seminal work by the late nineteenth-century nationalist Swami Dayanand Saraswati. His *Satyarth Prakash* (The Light of Truth) was an apology for the Vedic texts as the only texts worthy to be considered the Word of God. This designation was itself drawn from the Bible rather than the Vedas. Indeed, he was praised as 'the Luther of India' by one of his early translators.²⁵ His work contained harsh criticisms of the inadequacies of both the Bible and the Quran, bearing some similarity in this to the antibiblical polemic of Celsus, or even to Voltaire. It was also a polemic against the tradition of Brahminical exegesis and a call to return to the authoritative text itself on the model of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Some flavour of it can be gleaned from the following quotation, where Saraswati attempts to undermine the biblical account of creation through satire:

2. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good and God divided the light from the darkness. (1:3,4)

C. ~ Was the dead inert light able to hear what God said? If so, why cannot the sun, the lamp and the light of fire hear us? The light is dead and inert

²⁴ In contrast to Macaulay, Max Müller was deeply interested in helping Indians to recover their ancient traditions of pure monotheism and was in contact with Raja Ram-mohan Roy, an Indian reformer who embraced this perceived need to purify Hinduism. There is an interesting discussion of Roy's work and his syncretism of Indian and Western traditions in Figueira, *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins*, pp. 90–104.

²⁵ Durga Prasad uses this phrase on the title page of his 1908 version: *An English Translation of the Satyarth Prakash: Swami Dayanand Saraswati 'The Luther of India'; being a Guide to Vedic Hermeneutics* (Lahore: Virjanand Press, 1908).

and therefore cannot hear anyone. Did God only, after he had seen the light, know that the light was good? It appears that He did not know it beforehand he could not have been God. Hence the Bible is not the Word of God, nor is God mentioned in it an Omniscient Being.²⁶

Throughout the work, Dayanand adopts a tone that harks back to the legalist and historicist ways of reading that Jones and others represented as he seeks to show that only the Vedas attest adequately to a unitary, omniscient and omnibenevolent God—just as Voltaire had argued for his own purposes. Indian critics even in his day argued that this ethical monotheism at best only caught one aspect of the diversity of Indian religious practice. As Jyotirmaya Sharma comments,

Hinduism, thus restated, tended to seek historicity for the incarnation of its deities, rejected them as deities if such historicity could not be proved, encouraged a centrally sacred book, claimed monotheism as the only valid principle of Godhead, and supported the ideal of authority of an ecclesiastical organization, supporting missionary work and conversion.²⁷

Hinduism comes to resemble, on this account, aspects of European Protestantism. The counter to British imperialism that this represents is itself based on biblical models and the practices of biblical criticism. The Bible lies behind the aim of uniting the nation in a rediscovered purity based on ancient texts and also provides the tools to counter what become seen as corrupting foreign ideas and peoples.

Whatever the merits of such arguments, they account for the biblical resonances in the highly influential short text entitled *Hindutva*, first published in 1928 by the man seen as the founder of modern political Hindu nationalism, V. D. Savarkar.²⁸ Savarkar had studied Herder, Fichte and the Italian patriot Mazzini and was quite aware of what he was doing as he drew on Dayanand's work. Although he himself was not a practicing believer, his great watchword was that the true Hindu is someone who sees India not only as his fatherland, but also as his 'Holyland', which he writes as a single word. This is evidenced by the true Hindu's love of and commitment to the Sanskrit traditions of the country. Thus, although Savarkar acknowledged that the millions of Muslims and Christians in India may have genetic and cultural links to their Hindu neighbours, and indeed may regard India as their fatherland, he concludes

²⁶ Available online at http://www.aryasamajjamnagar.org/satyarth_prakash_eng.htm.

²⁷ Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Viking, 2003), p. 18.

²⁸ Vinayak D. Savarkar, *Hindutva. Who is a Hindu?* (Nagpur, 1928); quotations taken from the reprinted second edition (New Delhi: Hindi Sahitya Sadan, 2009).

yet it is not to them a Holyland too. Their holyland is far off in Arabia and Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently, their names and their outlook smack of a foreign origin. Their love is divided.²⁹

This seems as clear a case as could be of a biblically-derived concept, the holy land, being turned against the Bible in the interests of a biblically derived concept of national purity based on loyalty to a textual tradition. Of course, Savarkar's target is primarily the Quran and the Muslim community, but his definition of Hindutva, as taken up and developed by various Hindu national parties, has had profound effects on the relationship between the Indian state and all groups that are marginalised by this insistence on the defining role of the Sanskrit texts: Muslims, but also Christians and the aboriginal peoples.

The effect of this was to provide a mechanism for defining who truly can be classed as an Indian that is not based on language and race, given the diversity of the population of the subcontinent. By basing identity on loyalty to a particular textual tradition, groups with diverse linguistic and cultural heritages could be united as Hindus and Indians. However, a major portion of the population was excluded from the definition: Muslims. No claim to common ancestry and language even by recent converts could give them the same status as the Hindu. Their 'Holyland' is outside India and their sacred text is also an alien import. Not only was it brought into the country from outside but it is Semitic and so linguistically and culturally unrelated to the Aryan and Sanskrit traditions.

Clearly this counter to Islam was a major concern of the advocates of Hindutva. If the son of a Hindu family converted to Islam, the ties of family, inheritance and culture were not enough to allow him to be identified as a true Indian. The potential contribution of such a definition to the events that led to the partition and the creation of Pakistan is clear. Yet this potential for division between those who are biologically related on the basis of loyalty to a written tradition is a biblical legacy, too. As soon as the biblical prophetic books begin to distinguish between 'Israel' defined as a political and cultural entity and the 'true Israel' defined by its obedience to Torah, the same kind of division is posited. Common ancestry and living together in the land count for nothing in the final analysis; what matters is obedience to the law and traditions of Israel as interpreted by the prophets.

²⁹ Savarkar, *Hindutva*, p. 113.

Although the Muslim population is by far the largest and most powerful sector of Indian life to be singled out as not truly Indian in this way, other groups are also excluded. Christians also have a loyalty to a 'Holyland' beyond the borders of India, whether they are the ancient converts of the Mar Thoma church or recent converts through Western missionary activity. A biblical trope is thus ironically used to expel the Bible from the cultural range of the true Indian. In addition, tribal peoples who may well have longer claims to occupation of their lands have never been part of the Sanskrit traditions and so are not truly Indian either. There is equally a problem over the status of the many millions of illiterate people in India, especially those of lower castes, who have no appreciation of the Sanskrit texts.

What this means is that these groups can be effectively excluded from full citizenship, either formally or in practical terms. The remedy is in their hands, however, if they are willing to demonstrate their loyalty to the Vedic traditions. For the tribal peoples in particular, the programmes of education adopted for this end are seen as a threat to their indigenous traditions. Furthermore, with this 'sanskritisation' of their culture comes assimilation into a tradition of castes which is alien to them and where they are unlikely to be classified in the top ranks.

Into this mix the Bible reappears. In Northeast India, the message of social equality in the gospels and the tools of resistance to the sanskritisation of their culture which the Bible provides have been a major factor in the success of missionary activity in these areas. However, this success simply compounds the problem from the point of view of the advocates of Hindutva. The tribal peoples could have found a place as members of the true Indian community. Now they have deliberately allied themselves to an alien textual tradition. Whatever claims they have about their ancestral rights to land and cultural identity cut no ice, as they have failed the only test that matters in deciding who is fully Indian.

The irony is that the appeal to the Bible as the counter to the expropriation of tribal lands and the imposition of alien cultural values is an appeal to the very text that, through the vicissitudes of historical interpretation and reapplication, has supplied the ideological tools of the oppressors.

This biblical root is in fact recognised in contemporary Indian politics, but in what to Western ears is a rather troubling way. Secular opponents of this kind of Hindu nationalism see Savarkar and his followers as having distorted the tolerant and accepting diversity of Hindu tradition and speak of this as a 'semitization' of Hinduism. India's pluralist tradition has

been reconstructed, they claim, on the model of the narrow fundamentalist intolerance characteristic of the Abrahamic religions.

The troubling aspect of this, however, is that to use such a term as 'semitization' has its own echoes in the struggle of the Enlightenment and the German Romantics against what they saw as the dead hand of the Christian and Jewish traditions in Europe, and indeed in some kinds of European opposition to Islam, with consequences in the twentieth century that hardly need to be reiterated. Tolerance can tolerate anything except intolerance; the danger is that particular religious groups and ethnicities are labelled as intolerant by definition. The door is then open to ethnic and religious discrimination in the name of the secular openness of the Hindu, or the European, tradition. This, as much as the more blatant hostility of the Hindutva ideology, is a cause for concern for the Christian tribes of North East India who could find themselves stigmatized as advocates of 'semitization.'

An appeal to the Bible, therefore, is no simple recourse for Indian Christians. The Bible's complicity in the shaping of the political history of India precludes that. In a prime example of what postcolonial theorists label 'mimicry', by shaping the ideologies of imperialism the Bible becomes an inescapable factor in shaping ideologies of nationalist resistance.

What we have seen is the result is a complex interaction between different interpretative strategies and ideological needs applied to the Bible and to the Sanskrit texts by the various participants involved in the development of Hindu nationalism. European scepticism discovered a textual tradition that predated and seemed to foreshadow biblical history. Countering this with a firm belief in the primacy of the biblical account, a scholar like Jones saw the links between the traditions as a confirmation of the Bible's truth, but also separated what he considered an Indo-Germanic heritage from the Semitic heritage of the Bible. In Germany, where the drive for political unity did not base itself on the Bible, the discovery of this older tradition was taken as a vindication of the cultural unity and antiquity of the German peoples. At the same time, it became the basis for a similar assertion of cultural and political priority on the part of various Indian parties. For the British colonizers, this then became a direct threat to the Bible as the ideological basis of British identity.

As one response to this, a polarization occurred whereby Indian nationalism was conceived in textual terms in a mirroring of the British attitude to textual authority. In order to counter the claims of both the Quran and the Bible, the Sanskrit tradition was reconceived as a body of revealed

scriptures and Indian identity was linked to knowledge and acceptance of these texts. So the German valorisation of the Sanskrit texts was linked to a British acceptance of the role of authoritative revealed texts in defining national identity. In the process, the Bible's mechanisms for ensuring the purity of its transmission become turned against it and were redeployed in the service of a rival tradition, thereby recasting those traditions in its own image.

In such a context, it becomes a complex matter to use the Bible as a tool of resistance. Biblical scholars may not be able to provide an easy way for biblical readers to enlist the text in their struggles for justice and recognition. At the very least, though, it behoves us as biblical scholars to explore and, where we can, explain the reason for that complexity.

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